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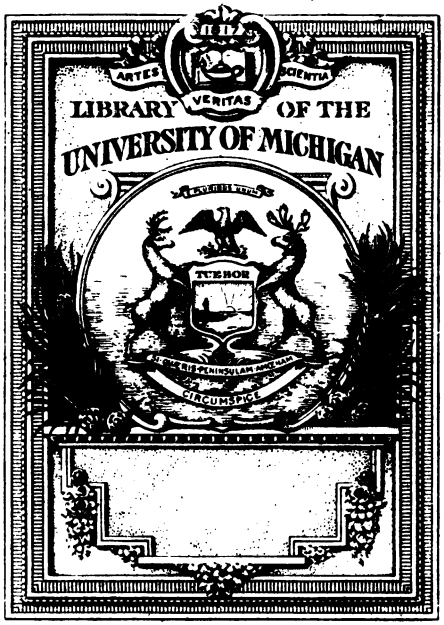
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THE WHITE BEAVER

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON

AUTHOR OF "THE GUNBOAT SERIES," "THE HOUSEBOAT SERIES," "LUCKY TOM SERIES," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Last Turkey,	1
II.	Water on the Rampage,	24
III.	The Disaster at the Mill,	46
IV.	Sandy and the Indian,	68
V.	Awaiting the Lynchers,	90
VI.	Paul Smith at Home,	112
VII.	Mr. Smith's Liberality,	134
VIII.	The White Beaver,	157
IX.	Hector Becomes Enraged,	179
X.	Bob Receives a Letter,	201
XI.	Bob Hears Bad News,	223
XII.	Old Man Carter's Proposition,	246
XIII.	The Stage-Driver's Warning,	268
XIV.	A Plan That Didn't Work,	291

CHAPTER PAGE

XV. Walcott Plots Highway Robbery, ... 313

XVI. Held Up in the Woods, ... 335

XVII. Bob on the Trail, ... 357

XVIII. Walcott a Prisoner, ... 379

XIX. Conclusion, ... 402

THE WHITE BEAVER.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST TURKEY.

"DEAR PAUL: I have just come in from the woods, and I have a big secret to tell you. That old rogue has come back, or else he never ran away in the first place, is still monarch of all he surveys, and is as impudent as ever. I can hear him gobbling every morning when I am in camp, but all my efforts to get a shot at him have proved unsuccessful. I can't stalk him; and although I have done my most persuasive calling, I can't make him show himself. Suppose you come up and spend a week or two in the woods (father says he can get along without me for two weeks), and we will try him again. Perhaps you will be lucky enough to make him show himself. I shall expect you.

"Yours, in haste,

"HUGH."

So ran the note which Paul Smith took from the post-office one bright February

morning when he went up town to purchase some groceries for his mother. It would have been Greek to most boys who were not in the plot, but Paul evidently understood it, and he became highly excited at once. The idea of shooting the last turkey that was known to inhabit that country for miles around Jock's Lake, and which had attracted into the woods more than one fellow who was handy with the trigger, was an object well worth trying for, and Paul made up his mind that if his father could spare him he would go into the woods with Hugh and see if they could not waylay that old turkey. "That old rogue," as he was called by all who knew anything of his history, had once been the leader of a flock of wild turkeys who inhabited the shores of Jock's Lake, a few miles away; but one by one they had fallen before the aim of the sharpshooters who had gone into the woods in search of him, and now he was the only one left. His cunning proved to be too much for the skill of his human antagonists until the winter before our story begins, and then he had suddenly disappeared, and no one knew

where he had gone. Paul and Hugh were on hand as usual, with their double-barrels loaded with heavy shot, ready to start in search of the turkey if he made himself known; but they missed his old familiar gobble, and everyone seemed to think that some one had got the better of him at last. But this winter he was back again. While Hugh was in the woods assisting his father in getting out the lumber that was to run his sawmill during the coming summer he heard something that set him on nettles, and after that he did not do his part of the work very well. It was the turkey's gobble that took his mind away from the lumber business. Hugh recognized it—he could have picked it out if there had been a thousand turkeys gobbling in the woods—and he straightway concluded that he would bring Paul Smith up there to try his skill upon him. Paul once said in a mysterious way that he knew a trick that would make the old gobbler open his eyes, at least for a few seconds, when he heard of it, and this was the time for him to make his words good.

These two boys were old and firm friends. They lived a few miles apart, Hugh in the country and Paul in the village, but they had attended school at the academy until their fathers thought it was about time they were trying their hands at business. So they went into the mill with them, Paul running the circular saw which was intended to cut the slabs up into chunks, so that they could be used for kindling-wood, while Hugh was confined to a three-legged stool in the office. Of course this didn't suit the friends very well, and every time they saw an opportunity to do so they volunteered to go into the woods to help the men get out their lumber. Of course there was not so very much that they could do, but then the boys were busy, and their fathers were satisfied. If they succeeded in getting through, the woods were handy, deer were plenty, and the boys were remarkably successful in shooting them. At the time of which we write Hugh had been sent into the woods alone, and while there he happened to hear the old turkey gobble. It was midwinter, snow was deep on the ground,

and it was not often that turkeys gobbled at this season of the year; but the boys explained it by saying that he was lonely there in the woods all by himself and wanted company. On the day that Hugh came home he wrote a short note to Paul and gave it to the stage-driver, who put it in the post-office, and that was the way that Paul happened to get it.

We ought, before we go further, to say that Paul's father and Hugh's were partners in the sawmill business. They had gone into it while young men and without a cent of capital, and by strict attention to their duties had finally worked their way up to be the wealthiest men in that section of the country. They intended that their boys should follow in their footsteps, but they did not go very hard on them at first. After being confined so long at school they knew it would be hard work for a live, healthy boy to cling to his three-legged stool or stick to a circular saw for ten long hours every day, and so they gave them a resting spell whenever they asked for it. Their mill was located on South Lake

reservoir, nine miles from the nearest house. It was called a "reservoir" because it was used to feed the Black River Canal. Whenever the water became low in the canal, Mr. Carter, the man who was employed to keep watch over such things, would hoist the gate and allow the water from South Lake reservoir to flow into it. He always told the proprietors of the sawmill about what time this was going to happen, and they seized the opportunity to raft some of their lumber and kindling-wood into Black river, and so get the result of their work to market. Perhaps we shall have more to say regarding this man Carter by and by.

"Of course you may expect me," said Hugh, hastily folding up the letter and thrusting it into his pocket. "I will start to-morrow, and I will just bet that we get that turkey. I wonder how Hugh looks? I have not seen him for two weeks."

Paul bought his provisions as soon as he could, and with a basketful on each arm he started for home. He showed the letter to his mother, answered the few feeble objections

she made in regard to his confidence of shooting the cunning old gobbler while so many better hunters had tried to do it and failed, and then posted off to his own room. Pulling aside the curtain which concealed a small number of his chosen books from the dust, he finally selected one entitled "The Old Trapper's Diary," which he had read so often that he knew it almost by heart. Turning the pages rapidly, he soon fell upon the passage he wanted. It ran thus:

"An old pioneer once told me that whenever he wanted a turkey for his dinner he tied a piece of scarlet cloth around the neck of one of his domestic birds and turned him loose, and in less than an hour he was certain to get a shot. All the wild birds in the neighborhood would be certain to pitch upon the tame one, who would run for the house, thus bringing his assailants within reach of the pioneer's ambush."

"The more I read this thing the more certain I am that it will be successful," said Paul, putting the book away where it belonged. "Everything wild detests red—I think I ought to know, judging by the way

Hugh's bull ran me across that pasture of theirs when I had on my Canadian hunting-cap, which was trimmed with red—and, of course, if this old gobbler is anything like the others I have read of, he will want to fight. We have not got any house for him to run to, and so we will just tie our decoy where he is, and he will bring him within reach of Hugh's shotgun or mine. I do not know what Hugh will think of the project, or whether or not Mrs. Pratt will be willing to let us take one of her turkeys so far into the woods, but that's the only way we can get him."

While Paul was talking in this way to himself, he busied himself in getting his hunting-rig together. True, there was not much to be done, for everything was right to his hand. His double-barrel did not need any wiping out; it was always kept ready for business, so he put it away in the corner behind the door, in order that it could be readily seized in case he got up in the dark. Next he brought out his Indian basket. It was not a very nice thing, for it had been made by an

Indian woman under Paul's supervision; but the straps were all there, so that he could throw it over his shoulder, there was a canvas cover to shed the drops when it rained, and there was room enough in it for an extra suit of clothes.

Now this extra suit would have made a city boy open his eyes could he have seen it. Paul did not think that because he went into the woods carrying a gun on his shoulder he ought to make himself uncomfortable in cowhide boots, and go about in a ragged coat and with his hair sticking out at the top of his hat. He had copied his dress from a city sportsman whom he had chanced to meet at Jock's Lake during the previous summer, and he had used it ever since, and saw no reason to change it. He wore a coat made of canvas and dyed to a dead-grass shade; trowsers of the same material, and leggings and gaiters instead of boots. Of course he did not intend to take the gaiters into the woods with him. The snow was deep there sometimes, and he expected to change his gaiters for moccasins

and snowshoes when he reached Hugh Pratt's. Taken altogether he was a nobby-looking sportsman, and perhaps we shall see before we get through that it took an expert to beat him.

Paul ate an early breakfast, and at eight o'clock was at the post-office, ready to take the stage for Newport, the town near which Hugh Pratt lived. Everybody could have told that he was going on a hunting trip, for he carried his double-barrel on his shoulder and his Indian basket in his hand. At any rate, that was what Percival Morton and his brother Benjamin thought about it, for they began saying something to Paul as soon as he came within sight.

"Halloo! If here ain't Paul I am sick," exclaimed the first named. "Where are you going, Paul? And does your mother know you are out?"

Why is it that every good boy in town has some enemies? It was easy enough to see that these two boys had something against Paul, but what the trouble was no one in town knew. Perhaps he had far excelled

them in their studies at school. But at all events, whenever any one spoke of Paul Smith or Hugh Pratt behind their backs, these boys were always ready to denounce them as "duffers," and to declare that they wanted nothing to do with them. This being the case, it was rather difficult to determine why they should have spoken to him when he first came up.

"Why, don't you see where he is going?" replied Benjamin. "He has started for the woods to shoot that old turkey gobbler. Have you got your limber-go-shiftless suit in your Indian basket? You can't shoot the turkeys without that."

"Much good will that suit do him," returned Percival. "Say, Paul, you want to keep away from those woods and let that gobbler alone. Some of that timber up there belongs to my father, and you have been prying around on that ground too much."

Paul looked surprised. This was the first time he had heard of any law which said that he couldn't shoot anywhere he pleased.

"It is just as I tell you," said Percival, the

scowl on his face growing deeper, because he thought that Paul was laughing at him. "You will open your eyes worse than that when you get up there and go out to find that turkey. Father's ground has been posted."

"That's the first I ever heard of it," said Paul. "Who posted it?"

"Well, that's neither here nor there," said Percival, kicking some snow out of his way; "my father posted it, if you want to know."

"Did he give the notices to a constable to post them up?"

"No, he didn't. It is his own property, and he has the right to do what he pleases with it."

"Well, if his property has been posted I will not go on it," said Paul, starting on his way. "If it hasn't been posted, I calculate to shoot that turkey wherever I can find him."

"You want to keep off that property, I tell you, for if I find you there I'll have you in jail."

"Is there any law which says I shan't hunt on your father's piece of land up there?" re-

peated Paul. "If I see any notice I shall keep off; but I am going to have that turkey before I come back."

"I'll bet you don't," replied Benjamin. "All the best shots in the country have been after that turkey and didn't get him, and I don't know what chance you stand with your double-barrel shotgun."

Paul kept on his way without making any reply, climbed into the two-horse sleigh which did duty as a stage, and seated himself on the front portion of the vehicle beside the driver.

"All aboard!" he shouted, when he came out of the post-office with the bag which contained the mail in his hand. "Halloo, Paul, I guess you are the only fellow that is going to ride up with me. You are going hunting, ain't you? Going to get that old turkey this time?"

"Yes, sir; I'm going to try it," said Paul. "You will see something when I come back."

"Well, I hope to goodness you'll get him. There's been half a dozen men in the woods during the last two weeks, but no one got a

shot at him. They can call him and he will answer, but just the minute they try to creep up on him he takes wing and makes himself scarce about there. Now what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to make him come to me; I shan't go to him."

"I'll bet you you'll have your hands full," said the driver, with a laugh. "If he will come to you, what's the reason he won't come to other fellows?"

"You will see that I have the turkey when I come back. I've got a trick that he never had tried on him before."

The driver tried hard to find out what that "trick" was, but Paul said he would tell him when he came back. It was possible that it would not work, so in that case Paul would keep it to himself. They had plenty to talk about during their long ride, for it was two o'clock when they came within sight of Hugh Pratt's house, and not another passenger did they pick up on the way. The going was rough, for during the last two weeks it had been snowing steadily, the roads were so full

of drifts that oftentimes they were obliged to turn out into the fields, and before they had proceeded a mile on their way the wind veered around to the south and it began raining. The drops fell in a continuous shower, not furious, of course, but just enough to set the driver's tongue in motion concerning the gentle "drizzle-drozzle" which would take all the snow away before long, and when they arrived at Paul's journey's end their overcoats were wet all through. But when they came within view of Hugh Pratt's house the boy came down to the gate to meet him, and judging by the way the two greeted each other one would have thought they hadn't met for a long time.

"I was on the lookout for you and I knew you would come," said Hugh, as he led the way toward the house. "You are all wet, ain't you? Come in and hang your coat up by the fire. This rain is from the south and it's going to last a long time. Shall we go after that turkey?"

"Of course," said Paul, giving his gun and Indian basket up to Hugh and shaking the

drops from his coat. "We must go up there and get him before somebody else does. The stage-driver says there has been some men in the woods, but they haven't got a shot at him yet."

"Well, what is that plan you had in regard to capturing him?" said Hugh. "It has got to be something pretty deep, for the old fellow has been fooled so many times that you can't get the start of him with any plot that he can see through."

"I will tell you all about it after a while. By the way, do you suppose that your mother will let us have one of her tame turkeys?"

"What do we want it for?"

"To take into the woods with us on purpose to call that old gobbler up to us. We'll promise to take good care of it."

"Why, how are you going to work it?"

Paul and Hugh stood there on the porch, while the former went on and told him what he had read in "The Old Trapper's Diary." Hugh listened, and when Paul got through he broke out into a cheery laugh. He had never heard of such a thing before.

"Of course mother will let us take him," said he. "She is as much interested in our killing the turkey as we are ourselves. Come in, and we'll ask her about it."

Hugh opened the door, and in the hall he met Mrs. Pratt. She was glad to see Paul, and made numerous inquiries about his mother; but Hugh was so impatient to have the turkey business settled that he broached the subject at once, and urged it, too, in spite of all the objections his mother raised to it.

"Why, I'll never see my turkey again if you take him off so far into the woods," said she.

"We'll take just as good care of him as you would at home," said Hugh. "The men have plenty of corn to feed the cattle on, and it will be no trouble at all for us to shell off an ear or two every time he wants something to eat."

"It is the only way in which we can get that old gobbler," said Paul. "We have tried every way we can think of, and have so far met with no success."

"Well, I'll think about it," said Mrs. Pratt. "You know the holidays are all over now,

and I am keeping just enough turkeys to raise some more for the next time we will be called upon to have roast turkey for dinner. But how will you take him up there?"

"We'll build a coop for him," said Paul, "and stow it on top of the toboggan. We won't hurt him at all."

"Come on," said Hugh; "let's go into the kitchen and take your coat off. Mother says she will think about it, and that is just as good as though she had given her consent."

While Paul was pulling off his overcoat and hanging it on a chair, Hugh deposited his gun and Indian basket in one corner of the kitchen and went into the pantry, from which he presently came out with half a pie and a big piece of cheese, which he placed upon the table. Paul said he wasn't hungry, but when he seated himself at the table he did not get up until the pie and cheese had disappeared.

"Now, I guess that will do you until supper," said Hugh. "We must go out and make the coop."

"Don't you think you are presuming a good deal on your mother?" said Paul. "She

may think of it, and at the same time make up her mind that we can't have the turkey."

"I have been acquainted with that woman a long time, and I know that she will decide in our favor. I tell you she would be just as tickled as anybody if we could kill that turkey."

The boys found boards in plenty about the barn, together with hammer, nails and saw, with which they built the coop, but they were so long about their work that it began to grow dark before they had it all completed.

"There," said Hugh, shouldering the coop, "I will put this near the door of the house in which he roosts. Say! We want to take an old gobbler with us, don't we?"

"We ought to take one with us, for he will show fight when he sees the wild one coming," said Paul.

"All right. I will just put this down there, and in the morning, when I capture him, it will be no trouble to shove him into the coop. Come in. I guess supper is ready."

The meal was enlivened by conversation of almost every sort except the one which rela-

ted to the killing of the old turkey gobbler, and when it was ended Mrs. Pratt said she had concluded to let them have the turkey, provided they wouldn't injure it in any way. With a wink at his companion Hugh started out to bring in the toboggan. It was a keepsake of a boy he had met in Canada, who gave it to Hugh to remind him of the first deer he had shot in that far-away country. The boys found it just the thing to take on their hunting trips to Jock's Lake—much better, in fact, than their old-fashioned sled, which ploughed into the snow so deep that they had to stop every few feet and lift it up to get rid of the slush that had congregated beneath it. It was roomy enough to accommodate all the things they wanted to take with them, and when they got through they had an extra suit of clothes, bedding for their cots in case they stayed out all night, their guns and ammunition were tightly strapped on to it, and on the top was a level space large enough to accommodate the turkey and his coop. After they had got the toboggan loaded for their journey Hugh brought out his checker-board, and

until ten o'clock the boys were deeply interested in their game, until Mrs. Pratt insisted that they should go to bed.

"I am afraid this rain is going to spoil our hunt," said Hugh, after he had taken a few turns up and down the porch. "It is coming down now harder than ever."

"No fear of that," answered Paul; "the turkey will be just as lonely in this sort of weather as he would on a bright day, and of course he will gobble. That's all we want of him—to find out where he is, and we'll depend on our turkey to do the balance."

The next morning the two boys left the house long before the other members of the family were stirring, and directed their course toward a shed that stood a short distance away. Paul remained outside, while Hugh disappeared in the darkness, from which there presently issued the sounds of a furious struggle—a flapping of wings, accompanied by a volley of incoherent ejaculations such as boys sometimes use when they are exerting themselves to the utmost. In a few seconds the fight was over, and Hugh came out of the

shed carrying a turkey that was almost as large as himself.

"I tell you he fought for his freedom," said Hugh; "he rapped me over the head with his wings until I thought I would have to call for help. There you are," he continued, crowding the turkey into his coop and placing the slats over it; "now, when you come out again, we'll ask you to do something."

It did not take the boys long to eat breakfast, and when it was over Hugh kissed his mother good-by, while Paul took the toboggan out on the porch. The coop which contained the turkey was strapped securely on, and the boys, catching hold of the rope, hauled the sled down off the porch with a bang and started off for their eighteen-mile tramp.

"Mother, don't you think we had better ask Paul here to eat some of that turkey?" said Hugh.

"You haven't got the turkey yet," said Mrs. Pratt, with a smile; "wait until you bring him home and then we'll see about it. Good-by."

Mrs. Pratt did not think it necessary to

caution the boys about being careful of their guns, they had been on so many tramps, and always came through all right. She stood on the porch and watched them until a bend in the road hid them from view, and then, waving her hand in response to Hugh's signal, she went into the house.

CHAPTER II.

WATER ON THE RAMPAGE.

FOR three miles of their long journey the road was well broken, for sleighs passed over it almost continually, but beyond that the boys had to stop and fix on their snow-shoes. This would have been rather awkward walking for one who was not accustomed to this mode of getting over the ground, but Paul and Hugh went faster than they did before. It was nine miles from home to Wilkeson's, the last house they would meet on the way, and it was as far from that house as it was to the sawmill to which they were going. At first the turkey amused them, and made the boys tell one another that if he would only act that way when they brought him out to hunt they would be sure to get the wild gobbler. He objected to being confined in those close quarters, and protested against it with all the strength of his lungs. He kept

this up while they were passing through Newport, and the people they met on the street turned and looked at the boys with surprise.

"What have you got there?" said the postmaster, who was just then going into his office.

"A turkey," replied Hugh.

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Take him into the woods."

"What are you going to do with him after you get there?"

"Going to kill him, maybe."

And this was all the satisfaction that any one got out of Hugh. He did not want to tell what his object was in taking the turkey to the woods for fear that somebody else might get the start of him, and he wanted the first show at the old gobbler himself.

In due time they arrived at Wilkeson's, and there they halted to eat their dinner, and judging by the way the buckwheat cakes, to say nothing of the eggs and bacon, disappeared before their attacks, one would have supposed that they had left home without eating any breakfast at all. They paid thirty-

five cents for their meal, and it was well worth it. They started again on their way with light hearts, not forgetting to feed the turkey, and at four o'clock arrived at the sawmill boarding-house. Of course the cook and his assistant, who were busy getting supper, had a cordial welcome for them, and they listened while the boys told of their plan for capturing the wild gobbler.

"I hope you will get him," said the cook, "for the foreman says that his calling for somebody to keep him company just throws Bob Carter off his feet. He says that every once in a little while he goes to the back door of the mill just to hear him gobble."

"Is Bob here yet?" asked Paul.

"Yes; he's got your old place at the circular saw."

"Well, we'll go down and see him. The mill won't shut down for two hours."

The boys' first care was to stow away their toboggan. It was hauled into the house and placed behind the door, where it would be out of the way, their guns were unstrapped and hung upon hooks which they had placed

there for that purpose, and then they took the turkey into the woodshed, where he would be safe. The next thing was to hunt up Bob Carter. He was a poor boy who lived but a short distance from Hugh Pratt's, and he was one who had no faults to be found with him. He was honest, industrious and hardworking, and seemed determined to make the best of everything, for he knew that he was helping his mother, who was an invalid, and pretty near every cent he made went to pay the doctor. His father, Mr. Carter (or rather old man Carter, as he was generally called), kept watch over the gates, and when we have said that we have said everything that was to be said in his favor. He was lazy, that was the long and short of it, and it didn't make any difference to him who suffered by it. Why the State had placed him in that responsible position no one seemed to know. He got sixty dollars a month for keeping the water off the dams, and every cent he made went somewhere, but nobody knew where it had gone to. He never gave his wife a cent. Whenever she asked him for any he would say:

"Why, Bob is supporting you, and I don't know why you should need two to do it." Mrs. Carter had grown tired of asking for money, and consequently she took what Bob gave and said no more about it. It was said that Mr. Morton got him the position, and if he did, it was pretty good evidence that he did not like the men whose sawmill was close to the waters of which old man Carter had charge.

"Wait till we see your mill swept away, as it is bound to go sometime or other," said Percival Morton to Paul one day when he felt in bad humor about something; "it's bound to go, for Carter will get so lazy that he can't attend to it all the time. He will let the water come over the dams at first, but he can't raise energy enough to walk five miles to the upper dam to see about it, and the first thing you know your old sawmill will be here in Black river."

Paul thought of this as he and Hugh came out of the woodshed and bent their steps toward the mill. The steady rain that had been falling for two days had melted the

snow, and the water was already pouring over the dam in immense sheets. The noise it made sounded fearfully loud as they passed into the mill. Above the dam were a multitude of logs—their fathers' timber, which ought to have been hauled out on the bank before this time—and if the dam broke and those logs got started, they would create immense havoc among the quiet settlers below.

"I believe this dam is going to break," said Paul, shaking hands with the foreman, who chanced to be the first man they met on entering the mill; "just see how the water comes over it."

"It does come over lively, that's a fact," said the foreman, with a smile; "but old man Carter has been here three years, and I guess he knows what he ought to do. You see he wants to get a big head of water on, so that we can run some of our timber down to the lumber yard."

"Yes, but he will get a bigger header on than he wants," said Hugh, "when he sees all those logs going down. I think he had better open the gate."

The foreman smiled, and seeing that nothing was to be gained by talking to him, the boys turned toward a back room in which Bob Carter was engaged with his circular saw. Bob had seen them coming, and he stopped his work long enough to shake hands with them.

"Say, Bob, what do you think about this water?" said Hugh; "how long has it been going this way?"

"It began last night," said Bob, and he drew a long breath when he uttered the words. "I went over to see father about it, and he told me to mind my own business."

"Well, I wonder if he will say that to Hugh and me?" said Paul, who was plainly surprised. "We are going to ask him why he don't go out and open that gate five miles above here."

"I wouldn't say anything to him about it, if I were you," said Bob, who did not want to see his friends insulted if he could help it; "he will talk to you just as he did to me."

Bob went on with his work, and his friends turned and directed their steps toward old

man Carter's cabin. The water seemed angry as they looked down at it when crossing the bridge, and Paul wished that he had charge of the gates for about an hour. Wouldn't he let that water out in a hurry? Mr. Carter's cabin was neat and commodious—such a one as the State always built for its employees—but he did not keep it in very good order. There was no path to the door except such as the solitary occupant had made in his snow-shoes, and inside, as the boys caught a momentary glimpse of it through the open door, was worse than it was on the outside. His bed wasn't made up, and there were the dishes from which he had eaten his dinner still unwashed. Old man Carter sat in the door smoking his pipe, and he never moved as the boys came up.

"How do you do?" said Paul, as he and Hugh took their stand in front of the door. "You've got a great head of water on to-day."

"Yes," replied the man, slowly; "it has been raining so hard during the last two days that I haven't been out at all."

"Why, it doesn't rain to hurt anything,"

said Hugh, wondering if it was the rain that kept the man in and not his inherent laziness. "We have come up from home to-day and never minded it at all. I think you had better go up to the South pond and open that gate, and then come down here and open this one. If you don't you'll have a flood on your hands."

"Now I guess I can attend to my business without any help from you," said Mr. Carter, taking his pipe out of his mouth and frowning fiercely upon Hugh. "I am getting a big head of water on so that the men can run their timber down."

"Well, sir, you will get all the head you want in a few hours from now," said Paul. "We shall go up by that pond to-morrow, and if you don't hoist the gate we'll hoist it ourselves."

"I suppose you know what the law is in regard to touching those gates?" said Mr. Carter, with a grin. "If I see any water coming down here to-morrow I'll have you in jail. When it quits raining, so that I can go up, I'll go, and I shan't go before. Now if you are done with me you can go away."

Paul was pretty mad. He looked at Mr. Carter for a full minute, and then, yielding to the grasp that Hugh laid upon his arm, he allowed himself to be led away.

"Don't mind him," said his friend; "you can see for yourself that it wouldn't do to hoist the gate of the South pond first. Before we could get here the water would be along in a bunch, and we would have nobody here to hoist the gate and let the water off."

"I tell you, Hugh, it isn't laziness that is the matter with that man," said Paul, stopping and looking back at the cabin, as if he had half a mind to return and tell old man Carter what he thought of him. "It can't be that he is afraid of the rain."

"Well, I guess he is. He hasn't been out for so long that he is afraid of everything that looks like stormy weather. But we don't care for that. If that gate at the South pond isn't opened by this time to-morrow we'll hoist it ourselves, even if we have to go to jail for it. I wish that either your father or mine was up here for about ten minutes."

But the boys' fathers were busy in their

lumber yard, fully eighteen miles from there, and they knew they could not get word to them in time to save the dams, which, according to the boys' calculations, seemed to be on the point of breaking.

We have spoken of South pond, which lay five miles deeper in the forest. That pond was also intended for a "feeder" of the Black River Canal, because the water sometimes got low in the North Lake reservoir, and it needed some other water to float the boats. A telegraph would have been a nice thing to have, but, unfortunately, they did not possess it. But Mr. Carter could always tell by the looks of the overflow below the dam whenever water was needed in the canal, and he had no difficulty in keeping the canal always full.

"I tell you I am almost afraid to touch that South pond reservoir," said Paul.

"You're afraid of going to jail, are you?" laughed Hugh.

"No, I am not afraid of that. I guess my father has just as much influence in this country as Mr. Morton, and he wouldn't let me go to jail if he could help it; but it would be

just as you said a while ago. The water from South pond reservoir would all pour down here, and this dam couldn't stand it. I guess Percival must have known something about this thing."

"Why, how is that? I don't understand you."

The boys stopped on the bridge and looked down at the water, and then Paul began and told Hugh about what Percival had said to him in regard to finding his sawmill in Black river. And then he went on and revealed what the Morton boys had said about their father's land being posted, and Hugh greeted it with the most uproarious laughter.

"That boy don't know anything about law," said he, by the time his laughter would allow him to speak. "Suppose his land is posted and he takes us up for shooting on his grounds, he can't do anything to us. He can warn us to keep off his ground, and that's all he can do."

"I told him I should shoot the turkey wherever I found him," said Paul.

"That was perfectly right and proper. But

that old rogue isn't on his grounds now. The last time I heard him yelp (I didn't have my gun with me, so I had to take a muzzle-loader that belonged to one of the men) it was on the path on which the cattle go to and from their work every day. It was about two miles from the old South pond."

The boys took another look at the angry water which leaped in broad sheets over the dam, and then went into the boarding-house and drew chairs up close to the fire. It was cold outside if it did rain, and the fire was a good thing to have about. The swinging-lamps were lighted, and every time the cook or his assistant came in to arrange the table they always stopped and said a word to the boys.

"No doubt you think it is a pleasant thing to have a fire to crawl up to," said the cook, when he brought in two plates containing bread, which he placed in orderly array. "What would you do if you were out in the woods?"

"I wouldn't go far into the woods on such a day as this," said Hugh.

"Supposing you couldn't help yourself; you were out twenty miles from any house, you had been a long time gathering up your traps and had got home later than usual, and found your fire all out, and suppose you didn't have another match to bless yourself with?"

"Humph! I wouldn't go into the woods so ill provided," said Paul.

"You hadn't had anything to eat and you were mighty hungry," continued the cook; "and before you went to bed that night the wind chopped around to the north and blew as wind only does up here in the Adirondacks, the snow fell until it was two feet on a level, and when you aroused yourself in the morning it was so dark that you couldn't see a thing? You threw your blanket off, and saw what was the matter. The snow was almost as deep in your lean-to as it was outside."

"I tell you I should want a match about that time," said Hugh.

"I would get up and start for home," said Paul, rubbing his hands together and drawing a little nearer to the fire.

"I have been just that way," said the cook, running his eye over the table to see what should come next. "It is no fun being a guide, I tell you. It is easy enough in summer, but it is hard in winter."

"Well, what made you stay out so late in the woods?" said Hugh.

"I wanted to get some furs," said the cook; "but then, after all, a person don't make anything by it. All I got for the furs I caught that year was fifty dollars."

"You could have earned more in the sawmill."

"Certainly I could. And the sawmill is where I am going to put up at every winter after this."

The cook went out, and in a few minutes the whistle blew. Presently the men began to come in, stamping the snow from their feet and shaking the drops of rain from their coats, until there were twenty of them gathered about the fire. Those who had not seen the boys were eager to shake them by the hand, and when the cook and his assistant had brought in four large pans of baked pork

and beans and set the quart cups steaming with coffee at each plate, he called out, "Grub O," whereupon the men fell into their places. Paul had seen hungry men eat before, and consequently he did not pay much attention to it. He thought if he had been out all day driving cattle, and that was the occupation to which more than half of the men were accustomed, that one plate of beans and one quart of coffee wouldn't have been enough for him. The boys started the subject of the water going over the dam, but they soon found out that the men had every confidence in old man Carter that he would let the water off before it got too high, and so they finally dropped it. "That dam has stood a heap more water than it will have to bear this season," said the foreman, "and Carter has always let it go in time. If it gets much worse he'll start it; but don't you let it interfere with your sleep to-night."

"We are going up to the South pond tomorrow morning," said Hugh, "and if we find the water as bad there as it is here shall we hoist the gate?"

"Oh, no, you mustn't try that," said the foreman, quickly. "You would send the water down here with a rush, and this dam couldn't hold it. You must let it off here first, and then go up and attend to the South pond reservoir."

The boys said no more, but all that evening sat around the fire and listened to the roaring of the water as it sped over the dam, when they should have been listening to stories. A good many of the men had been guides, and were full of thrilling or amusing incidents which had happened while they were out with the customers of the different hotels. Finally, as the hands on the clock approached nine, the men began to slip off one after the other and go upstairs to bed, and presently Hugh and Paul were the only ones left.

"I wish I could feel as much confidence in that lazy old Carter as the foreman does," said Hugh, as he turned his back to the fire and prepared to stretch himself before going upstairs; "but somehow the way he acted to-day makes me feel nervous."

"I don't believe this dam has stood more

water than this," said Paul, getting up and pushing back his chair; "I noticed some places where it was coming over two feet deep."

The boys went upstairs without a light, but speedily found the bed, which was made up on purpose for them. They heard the roaring of the dam, and finally fell asleep; but before he had sleep enough Paul felt the foreman's hand on his shoulder and heard his cheery voice ringing in his ears.

"Come, you bold hunters, it is time you were up," said he; "that turkey will get tired of waiting for you."

The boys opened their eyes, but everything was as dark as it was when they went to bed. However, there was a light shining up from below, and they knew that the cooks were in motion and that breakfast would soon be ready. It was five o'clock, but the teamsters had to feed their cattle, the swampers had their axes to sharpen, and there were plenty of things that needed attending to before seven o'clock came, the time when the men were to go to the mill and the teamsters to the

woods after more logs. And there was something that the boys had to do. Their turkey needed feeding at once, for they were going into the woods, and there was no telling when they would be back.

The first thing the boys thought of was the water that came over the dam. They went out, dark as it was, and found that it had not fallen in the least. The noise it made sounded louder than it did the night before; but even the foreman smiled and said nothing when they reported the matter to him.

"That water seems to get the best of you, don't it?" said one of the teamsters, slyly poking Paul in the ribs with his finger. "I'll bet you won't see any of it to-night."

"Why, it is raining, and old man Carter is afraid to go out in it," said Hugh. "It is a pity he ain't sugar or salt, so that he would melt all away."

The breakfast passed off in much the same way that the supper hour did, only the men did not take so long about it. They got up, one after the other, as soon as they had satisfied their appetites, the men who belonged at

the mill starting on a run for it, while those who had charge of the cattle put on their greatcoats and went slowly out to the barn. These last were the ones that Paul and Hugh went with, for a teamster had promised to show them right where he was on the road when he heard the turkey gobble the day before. Paul took the guns and Hugh went to the woodshed to secure his decoy, and the battle he had at his father's house was repeated.

"You don't want to come out, do you?" said Hugh, seizing one of the turkey's legs and trying hard to get hold of the other one. "But I expect you've got to come, for we want to use you. Ah! there you are. Now if I can hold your wings——"

It was hard work to place the turkey under his arm so that he could hold his wings and legs at the same time, but Hugh was determined on having his own way, and when he succeeded in putting him just where he wanted him, he found Paul at the door waiting for him. He had a piece of red flannel in his pocket, which they intended to tie around

the neck of the turkey when they arrived on the battleground, and there was nothing more needed. They found the bob—there were eight yoke of cattle hitched to it—and Hugh seated himself on the rear runner, so that his turkey's feet could rest on something. Paul took his place on the forward runner, in company with the driver, who, after the last yoke of cattle had been made fast to the sled, seized his whip, made it crack like a pistol, and they were off for the woods.

"I should think that turkey would get frightened when he sees so many of you passing along the road," said Paul. "He has been scared so many times that I should think he would go farther back in the woods."

"He sees so many of us that he don't get frightened at all," said the driver. "He knows that we don't molest him, and I believe he would let us drive right up to the tree where he is roosting."

The driver, who used to make his living in summer by acting as guide to the customers at one of the hotels, gave Paul a good deal of advice, which the boy really

did not need, in regard to shooting turkeys, and the three miles were finished before they knew it. Then he stopped his team and jumped off the bob to show the boys just where they wanted to stand.

"Now here's the place where I heard him calling yesterday," said he. "If it was a little lighter you would hear him. He's right over there, not two hundred yards from the road. Tie your turkey out in plain sight, and then get away and hide yourselves in the bushes. Good luck to you."

The driver concluded his remarks by making his whip crack again like a rifle, jumped on his bob and went on his way. The boys were alone now in the woods, and Paul's heart beat a trifle faster than usual. He was about to try a trick on the old rogue which had never been tried before, and he didn't know how it was going to work. He wished now that he had not said so much about it.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISASTER AT THE MILL.

"SO far, so good," said Paul, looking around. "The snow is deep, ain't it, and we haven't brought our snowshoes with us. Let's go a little farther into the woods and see if we can find some stump or tree to tie the turkey in plain sight. That's what the driver told us. I've got a string in my pocket."

Hugh floundered through the deep snow after Paul, and finally arrived at a place where the bushes were comparatively open, and Hugh said he believed he would stop there. His arms ached, for it was no small job to lug that fat bird through snow that was up to his knees. Paul leaned the guns against a convenient log and straightway produced his stout cord and piece of red flannel from his pocket. In five minutes more the turkey was

securely confined and the piece of flannel tied around his neck. Hugh gave a sigh of relief as he placed his heavy burden on the snow, and stood off to see what he was going to do. The captive bird did not understand the situation, and neither was he pleased with it. He tried to escape, and finding that his efforts were unavailing he squatted down on the ground with his tied leg stretched out straight behind him.

"I am afraid your plan won't work after all," said Hugh. "He is played out already."

"Don't worry about that," was Paul's reassuring reply. "He will be lively enough when he hears the old rogue gobble. Now, where shall we hide ourselves?"

After a short council of war the boys took their guns and started away in different directions, one going up and the other down the road. In two minutes more they were snugly hidden in the bushes within easy range of the captive, and impatiently waiting the result of their experiment. Nor were they obliged to wait long. A loud gobble presently sounded from the woods, whereupon the captive turkey

straightened up and got upon his feet. When the bird spoke again he lowered his wings, spread his tail, and strutted back and forth as far as the length of the cord would permit; and when the third challenge was given he stretched out his neck and gobbled a loud defiance. The decoy was doing his allotted work just as Paul had expected him to do, and now it remained to be seen whether or not the wild turkey could be called up by him. This was a point which was so long undecided that Paul began to believe that his plan was destined to end in failure. The wild bird flew down from the tree in which he had passed the night and answered the captive bird every time he spoke, but he did not seem inclined to cultivate his further acquaintance. He had been deceived a good many times and had learned wisdom from experience; but still that defiant gobble was more than he could stand. He had held undisputed possession of the woods for a long time and could not tolerate the presence of an interloper. Very slowly and with extreme caution he drew near the decoy, and Paul was seized with an attack of genuine "buck ague"

when he saw him come out of the woods, but too far away to be reached by his far-killing gun. Even after the wild bird caught sight of his supposed rival he was very suspicious, and it is possible that he would have gone off without approaching any nearer to him had it not been for that taunting red rag around the tame bird's neck. That was a sight he could not endure. Fear gave place to rage, and after a little hesitation he advanced to the conflict, every hostile demonstration on his part being met by a counter demonstration from the decoy. Paul, who had by this time recovered his composure, kept a close watch on all his movements. Presently a sheet of flame shot out of the thicket in which he was concealed, there was a loud report, and the old rogue fell in his tracks. With his death the last turkey in the Adirondacks was wiped out.

"Hey-youp!" shouted Hugh, springing up from the place where he was hidden. "Run and catch him, Paul. Don't you see how he struggles? He will soon recover and be off like the wind."

"I guess not," replied Paul. "I shot him in the head."

Hugh uncocked his gun after that, and by the time they had reached the turkey he was motionless. He had not any head on him. The charge, true to its aim, had hit him fairly, and after a short struggle he was stretched out dead.

"Gracious, how heavy he is!" said Hugh, handing his gun to his companion and trying to lift him from the ground with one hand. "Now that we have secured our game, I say let's go home. I think father will have something to say about the way this water is running over the dam."

"No doubt he will if we get there in time," said Paul. "It is my opinion that it will be too late when we see him."

Paul at once shouldered his game and started back to the place where their decoy was confined, and even when they got up to where the turkey was tied he had not ceased his hostile demonstrations. He gobbled and strutted at a great rate, and when Hugh untied him and took him by the legs he called loudly.

Hugh placed him under his arm, and then began that three-mile march back to the boarding-house; but when they came within hearing distance of the sound of the water pouring over the dam, they found that the sound had ceased. Instead of the roar and the rush they heard that morning there was a sullen murmur, such as waters make when passing over rocks in their course. The boys looked at each other and then broke into a run, and when they came around a bend within sight of the boarding-house they found a body of men there, some without their hats and coats, just as they had been at work in the mill, who were looking down at the river, but made no sound. When the boys got up beside them they saw what was the matter. The dam had been carried away; there was scarcely a vestige of it left on either side; one part of the mill was in ruins, and the logs which had been confined on the upper side of the dam were no longer in sight. They had gone down the river. The men looked up when the boys appeared among them, then shook their heads and had nothing to say,

except the foreman. He seemed to think that the blame of the matter rested entirely with him.

"Well, you fellows were right when you came up here yesterday," said he, and one would think from the way he spoke that he was sadly depressed over the appearance of things.

"Why, how did it happen?" asked Paul.

"I thought this morning that the water was getting a little too high," said the foreman, "and so I crossed over the bridge to see old man Carter about it, and when I got to his house I found he had gone. The print of his snowshoes was all right, and I knew he was going up to South pond, and so I came back satisfied. He probably went on until he heard the South pond breaking, and then he came back with all the speed he could command. He got here before the water did, but instead of hoisting the gates he went over to his house and got some things he wanted, crossed the bridge, and we have not seen him since."

"Has he gone away?"

"I guess so. At any rate I have lost my job," said the foreman, putting his hands in his pockets and marching up and down the bank. "If I had done yesterday what you boys wanted me to do, I wouldn't be in this fix."

The boys had not a word to say to the foreman that would comfort him. They took another look at the dam, at the bank-full river, at the ruins of the mill, and then went into the woodshed. Paul placed his decoy in the coop, while Hugh hung the wild turkey upon a hook, to stay there until they were ready to go home, and then the boys went into the dining-room and drew chairs up in front of the fire. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, and dinner had long been over; but the boys didn't care for anything to eat. The disaster that had overtaken their fathers drove all thoughts of eating out of their minds.

"The only thing that I blame the foreman for is that he did not go to work and pull those logs out of the dam," said Paul. "Anybody with half an eye could see that that dam was going to break."

"I blame old man Carter for it all," said Hugh, rubbing his hands nervously together. "He didn't want to go out because it rained! I hope those logs did not kill anybody. What do you suppose those men would do to old man Carter if they could catch him?"

"They would do just the way they do with the negroes down South," said Paul, and Hugh looked at him in surprise. It was plain enough to see that Paul would have taken a hand in the lynching if old man Carter had been around where he could get hold of him.

"Why, Paul, I didn't know that you were built that way," said Hugh.

"Just see what he told us yesterday. A man that would let a little rain stand between him and his duty isn't fit to live. We must get home as soon as we can, Hugh. The folks may need us in the lumber yard."

"That's just what I am afraid of," said Hugh, getting upon his feet. "We will start for home bright and early to-morrow morning. Now let us see if we can find something to eat. What is done can't be undone, and so we might as well submit to it."

About the time the boys got into the kitchen to search for something with which to satisfy their appetites the cook came in. Like all the rest of the men he was completely overwhelmed by the catastrophe, and the worst of it was he didn't know what had happened on the river below. Nobody had been injured at the mill, although there was some tall struggling to get out of the way of the water, it came on so suddenly; but a few miles down the river the banks of the river were low, and there was no telling what those logs and the water had done when it reached a place where it could spread out over the bank.

"I reckon you boys are hungry now, ain't you?" said the cook. Just you sit down in there and I will bring you something. I never saw a man so used up as that foreman is."

"He said he didn't think there was any danger," said Hugh.

"Well, why should he?" said the cook. "Old man Carter has been here a long time——"

"We don't care anything about that," said Hugh, impatiently. "He failed to do his duty because it rained, and we can see the result of it in the ruins of our sawmill. Now sit down. I want you to tell me how this thing happened, so that I may know what to say to my father when I meet him in the lumber yard."

The cook seated himself in the nearest chair and began his story, although he didn't have much to tell. He was busy in the house with his assistant, getting dinner, when he heard loud voices coming from the mill. He listened a moment and then rushed to the front window, and on looking up at the reservoir he saw a wave coming that was fully four feet in height. The South pond dam must have given away all on a sudden.

"It was onto the mill before you could say s'cat," said the cook, getting up in his excitement and moving his chair a little nearer to the fire. "The foreman, who happened to be standing where he could see it, had just time to shout: 'Great heavens, boys! We are done for now. Let every man take care

of himself.' He was the last one out of the mill, the foreman was, and had just barely time to get out. In a minute more the addition part of the mill, in which the machinery was located, was torn off and went down in in the river. I tell you the way those logs went over the break was a caution."

"They ought to have been hauled out long before," said Paul; "then they would not have been in the water to create consternation among the settlers along the river banks."

The boys did not say "I told you so," because it was plain enough to them that the men were all cast down by the disaster, and if they said anything they would say nothing but the truth, however disagreeable that might be to the foreman. The latter had acknowledged his error in not sending old man Carter up to hoist the gate in the South pond reservoir, and thought he was going to lose his job by it; and if he confessed to the same when confronted by Mr. Smith and Mr. Pratt it might go hard with him.

"I don't want that foreman to lose his job," said Paul, looking at Hugh, "because he has

been the best man to put in charge of things. I will speak a word to father, if you will."

"Of course I will," said Hugh, and so the matter was settled. The foreman did not have anything to do with hoisting the gates any way, but still he might have kept his eye on old man Carter and taken particular pains to see that he did his duty.

The boys became silent after that, and the cook, after furnishing them with a good dinner, went out to where the foreman was and told him what they had said about it. Of course it removed a big load of apprehension from his mind, but he was determined, if he could have his own way, that old man Carter should not be employed to hoist the gates when the new dams were built.

And where was Bob Carter all this time? The boys did not see him when they came up, for he had gone off by himself to think over the matter. It did not seem possible that anybody could blame him for what his father had done, but somehow he took it sadly to heart. The owners of the lumber yard had been good to him since he left school, and he

thought this was repaying them in a very bad way. More than that, some of the men began to look cross-eyed at him, and to hint pretty strongly that if they couldn't get hold of the man who was to blame for the carrying away of the dam they could get hold of his son, and it would be some satisfaction to know that somebody by the name of Carter was being punished for it.

"I declare I did not have a thing to do with it," said Bob, repeating the phrase which he had used to the men when the thing first happened. "I was employed in the mill, getting a dollar a day, and I tried to do my duty there; but if I had had charge of those gates this thing never would have happened. And now father has gone and run away. I just know that was what he was up to, and ten to one they will never see him again. What will poor mother do?"

Bob was sitting down on the bank, thinking these matters over, but when the thoughts of his mother came into his mind he got up and walked up and down in a state of great nervousness and excitement. He did not care for

himself, for his father had never done anything for him, but his mother seemed to have some affection for him, and he wondered how in the world he could make the thing easier for her. He believed he would go and see Paul and Hugh about it. They had always treated him friendly, and he did not think they would turn the cold shoulder toward him on account of what his father had done. With this thought in his mind he brushed the snow from his pants and started toward the boarding-house. He entered the dining-room just as the boys were putting on their hats to go out and take another look at the ruins.

"Halloo, Bob," said Paul, extending his hand and giving Bob a hearty shake. "You got through all right, did you not?"

"Yes," said Bob, slowly, "I got through all right, but I would like to know if your father intends to discharge me."

"Discharge you? I reckon not," said Paul, in surprise. "You had nothing to do with wrecking the mill."

"But I tell you that your father would

stand a poor show," said Hugh; "he knew that the dam was going to break all the while."

"But some of the men appear to think that I ought to be punished for what he did," said Bob, who seemed to be very much cast down when he spoke of it.

"What men are they that say that?"

"Oh, there's more than half of them that I heard talking in the same way."

"Well, the next time you hear anybody say that, you just tell him to mind his own business," said Paul, indignantly. "Our fathers know who is to blame for this."

"I thought if you were going home to-morrow I would like to go too," said Bob. "Then I shall be right at hand, and they can easily discharge me if they want to."

"Of course you can go with us," said Hugh. "But if you think you are going to get discharged you will be disappointed. Now come out with us and take a look at things."

Bob accompanied the boys to the bank of the river, where the men stood watching the

waters as if they hoped that something would yet "turn up" in their favor, and Paul placed his arm about Bob's shoulder to warn the men that he had taken him under his especial protection. And he kept his arm on Bob's shoulder all the time that he was out there. There was nothing that could be done until the waters subsided.

"I tell you what I think ought to be done," said the foreman, drawing up alongside the boys. "I'll keep the teams in here to-morrow, and then with all the men that we can raise we'll go to work and pull out this machinery. The water will fall, so that we can easily do that. I am much obliged to you fellows for what you promised to say to your fathers on my account," he added, sinking his voice to a whisper. "I did not have anything to do with it at all, but I am afraid those men will think that I neglected my duty."

The boys promised to see him through, and then, finding that they could be of no use there, they led Bob around to the woodshed to show him the wild turkey.

"I did think I would stop at Hugh's house

to eat a piece of this game, but I'm afraid I shouldn't enjoy it," said Paul. "Hugh will have to eat his own share and mine, too."

"I don't see why I should," said Hugh. "You killed the turkey."

It was a very different lot of men that assembled around the supper-table on this particular night, and no one would have supposed that they were the same employees that had eaten their supper and cracked jokes with one another. The teamsters came in one after the other, gazed with unbounded surprise at the ruins, and could not rest easy until they had found some man able to tell them the whole story. They looked askance at Paul and Hugh, to see what they thought about it, and were greatly relieved to find that the boys were as sociable as they were the night before.

"The mill is insured," said one.

"Oh, yes," said Hugh. "It is insured against fire and accident."

"Then, of course, we'll have another mill some day, but how many of us will be employed in it is another question. Where is this old man Carter now?"

"He has skipped," said the foreman.

"Well, I don't believe that," said Hugh. "What good would it do him? He could go off into the woods, but he can't make anything by hunting at this season of the year. I think he is at home."

"Mighty clear of his doing any good there," said the teamster. "He doesn't give his wife a cent of money to spend for the doctor——"

The teamster looked toward Paul, and there he stopped. The boy was listening to him with a fierce frown on his face, and the teamster thought that if he intended to get employment at the new mill he had better keep a civil tongue in his head. Bob was at the table, and he heard every word of it. There was one thing which became evident to the men. The boys were not going to stand by and hear Bob abused for something his father had done.

The evening was passed in silence, except when the men began to get ready to go to bed. Then the foreman spoke up and gave them their orders for the next day. The

cattle would all stay in their barns and the teamsters would help take the machinery out of the water. That would take three or four days, and by that time either Mr. Pratt or Mr. Smith would be up there, and then they could tell what they were going to do. The teamsters did not like the idea of working in the water, but they were obliged to submit to it.

"I guess that order hits everybody but me," said Bob. "I am going home."

"Why, what do you want to go home for?" inquired the foreman in surprise. "You can keep to work right here, and your wages will go on all the time."

"I want to go home and see how mother is getting on. Of course she knows that the dam is broken, and she will be uneasy until she sees me."

"Well, if you are going to put it that way you can go," said the foreman, who was plainly disappointed. "I think it would be the best thing for the old man to go home, too."

"I'll bet he didn't go home," said the engineer. "I saw him cross the bridge, with a

huge bundle of things in his arms, not five minutes before the waters carried it away. The next thing you find of old Carter you'll find him up about Chazy Lake. He ain't a coming back in this country right away."

The next morning, at an early hour, the boys made a start for home, Bob pulling the toboggan with the wild game strapped on top. They did not see much of the overflow until they got to Wilkeson's, and there the banks of the river were somewhat lower than they were farther up the stream, and the water had spread out until it covered the most of his farm. The man had been out attending to some stock that he thought was washed away, and he was just going into the house to get his dinner.

"Halloo, boys," said he, in a jubilant tone, for he was certain that he would now hear what had happened at the mill. "You came through all right, didn't you? Anybody hurt up there?"

"No, sir," said Paul. "There's nothing up there but a wreck. Both the dams, the bridge and the mill are gone."

The man listened while Paul told his story, and then turned upon Bob with a most fiendish expression on his face.

"Where's your old man now?" he asked. "Do you know what we would do with him if we had him here? I've lost twenty head of cattle by this overflow, and if I could catch him I would serve him worse than old Sandy served the Indian."

"How was that, Mr. Wilkeson?" asked Paul. He saw that the man was going to abuse Bob for his father's neglect of duty, and he was anxious to get him off on another subject.

"You are hungry, ain't you?" asked the man. "Well, come into the house and get some dinner, and I will tell you all about it."

CHAPTER IV

SANDY AND THE INDIAN.

MR. WILKESON ascended the steps that led toward the porch, brushed the snow from his boots and opened the door, and Paul and Hugh followed him; but Bob Carter hung back. He firmly believed that a man who had such a look on his face as he had when he spoke of serving old man Carter worse than Sandy served the Indian was one that he had better not eat dinner with. Paul looked around to see why Bob was not coming, and with a nod he brought him to his side.

"I believe I'll not go in," said he in a whisper. "I'll go on home."

"Oh, come along," said Paul. "He won't say anything more against your father."

"Come on, Bob," said Mr. Wilkeson, appearing at the door. "Come in and fill up

on pancakes. They will make that toboggan draw easy on the way home."

"I don't believe I care for any pancakes," said Bob.

Mr. Wilkeson was a man who did not believe in arguing this point. He stepped out on the porch, and, taking Bob by the arm, gently forced him into the house.

"You didn't feel bad about what I said in regard to your old man, did you?" he added, as he closed the door. "Well, if you had had twenty fine head of cattle carried off by this senseless overflow, I expect you would have been mad, too. Now, boys, go there and wash and I will get dinner ready."

"Bob had nothing to do with the gates," said Hugh, pulling off his coat and pushing back his shirt-sleeves. "He was employed in the mill."

"I know he was, but when I saw a Carter I had to get off something mean," said Mr. Wilkeson.

The boys performed their ablutions at the sink, brushed their hair before the little looking-glass that was suspended on the wall,

and then Mr. Wilkeson took them into the dining-room and gave them seats at a well-filled table. He helped each of them to a bountiful supply of eggs, bacon and pancakes, and went on with his narrative.

"Old man Sandy—I never heard him called by any other name, or if I did I have forgotten it—was an old man when I was a boy about sixteen years of age. There was one thing about him that I always remembered, and that was he always hated Indians. The Onondagas especially were a band of men that he had something against. He settled down here on Black river when the country was almost new, and game of all kinds—bear, deer and beaver—was thicker than you boys ever saw it. If a party of those Indians went hunting, old Sandy always knew it. He went into the woods about the same time the Indians did, stayed just as long, no matter whether he had anything to eat or not, and when they came out again they were always one or more less in number than they were when they went in. Something had happened to get him down on the Indians, but what

it was nobody ever knew. Some said he was in the fort when nearly all the garrison were massacred by those same savages, and there he lost a partner who was a second brother to him, and who was just about the same age that he was — twenty years. Others said he had been in the woods after peace was declared, and those Indians came upon their camp one dark and stormy night and killed the partner, while old Sandy himself escaped. At any rate he was down on the Indians, and even when we were at peace it didn't make any difference to him.

"Well, one time he got married and brought his wife home to his cabin, and then folks thought that they would certainly get at the truth of the matter by pumping his wife. But the woman was too sharp for that. She didn't know more about it than you do. Finally things got so bad that the Indians would not go into the woods at all from this way. They would come up here, make cautious inquiries around, and if they found that old Sandy had gone into the woods they would go back to their reservation, and go

into the woods by the place where Lowville now stands—by the way of the lakes.

"After awhile the surveyors got interested in laying out the counties, and one day there was a man come up here to do a lot of that sort of work. He easily picked up a white man and an Indian to show him the road, and when the Indian found that they were coming up Black river he didn't want to go; but finally he decided that he would come as far up here as old Sandy's cabin. If anything should happen to keep old Sandy out of the woods he would go on with the surveyor; but if old Sandy was in the woods he would go back to his reservation.

"Well, they came on, and presently drew up in front of old Sandy's cabin. Mind you, the surveyor had worked hard to get the Indian to inform him what was the matter with Sandy, but the Indian would not tell him. He would tell him that Sandy was 'bad medicine,' but beyond that he had no more to say. The surveyor went ashore and drew up at Sandy's door. He had some idea of taking Sandy with him, but he kept that mighty still

from the Indian, but when he got to the door he found that the old man was sick. He was laid out in bed with his clothes on, but, after making some inquiries in regard to the men who were with him, he seemed inclined to get up; but when he found that one of his guides was an Onondaga Indian, Sandy concluded that he would stay where he was. He found when he sat up on the bed that he was too sick to move, and so the surveyor would have to go without him.

"Now this surveyor was a city man, and whenever he went into a hunter's cabin he always took particular pains to see how things were arranged, and what sort of comforts they had that civilized people could not get along without. One thing he noticed was Sandy's rifle. It reposed on two hooks over the door, and the surveyor marked the way in which his bullet-pouch and powder-horn were hung to the muzzle. He hadn't seen anything like it before, and, as he was something of a sportsman himself, he thought he would introduce it on his arrival at home.

"'Well, Sandy, I am sorry you can't go

with me,' said the surveyor. 'You know all the woods up here better than any Indian, and I rather thought I would get you to show me the points. I'll give you two dollars a day if you will go with me.'

"'Yes, I've hunted around these woods a time or two; but just now I am sick,' said Sandy. 'The Indian will take you through all right.'

"So the surveyor was obliged to go without him. When the latter got down to his canoe where the Indian was, something like a smile spread over his face when he saw that the man had come alone.

"'Sandy no go?' he asked.

"'No; he is sick,' said the surveyor, 'and we'll have to get along the best way we can by ourselves.'

"'That's all right. That's *all* right,' said the Indian, with a long breath of relief; and from that moment the Indian was like a new man. He even joined in their conversation with his imperfect English, but all the while he kept his eye roaming around the woods as if he was in search of something. They had

paddled about half an hour when the Indian sprang to his feet, almost overturning the canoe as he did so, and exclaimed:

"'Sandy shoot me!'

"The surveyor and the white man looked all around, but could not see anything, and before the Indian could go over the side of the canoe and get out of danger they saw the smoke of a rifle come out of a thicket about three hundred yards in advance, and the next minute a bullet struck the savage plumb between the eyes. The Indian gave a kick, and into the river he went. Of course he sank out of sight immediately, and the surveyor had no means of bringing him to the surface.

"'Let's go back and go to Sandy's cabin,' said he, so excited that he could scarcely speak. 'We can get there before he does, and we'll see if he has had any hand in this business.'

"They turned their canoe about and made all haste down the river, and upon arriving at Sandy's house the surveyor jumped out and ran up to it. There on the bed lay the

old man, just as he was when the surveyor first saw him. The man cast his eye toward his rifle, and nothing there had been disturbed. The weapon and the bullet-pouch and powder-horn did not look as though they had been touched.

"'Well, this beats me,' said the surveyor, who did not know whether or not he was dreaming. 'Sandy, did you shoot that Indian?'

"'What Indian?' asked Sandy. You see Sandy was a man of few words, and he did not allow himself to be brought into an argument on any point.

"'What Indian! You know what one I mean,' said the surveyor. 'That Onondaga Indian who was serving as my guide. We are at peace with those fellows now, and I tell you you are going to be arrested.'

"'Don't know nothing about no Indian,' said Sandy. 'You can call my ole woman and ask her. She is hoeing in the garden.'

"The surveyor went and called the woman, and she said she had been at work in the garden ever since the surveyor was there in the

morning, and she did not know whether her man had been out of the house or not."

"And did she know it?" asked Hugh.

"Well, it looks to me that way, although I ain't judging Sandy," said Mr. Wilkeson, with a smile. "When the surveyor went away he could say to his old woman: 'You had best go out and hoe in the garden, and I want you to stay there till I call you.' He could easily have said that, couldn't he? The old woman, who knew what he was up to, went out, and when she was gone Sandy got up, shouldered his rifle, went up the river and shot the Indian."

"Then he wasn't sick at all," said Paul, who was deeply interested in the story.

"That's the way it looks to me," said Mr. Wilkeson. "When he came back he came on a run, and she heard his step in the cabin. Well, sir, the surveyor went off, and in due time came up with some men to raise the body of the Indian, but not another Indian did he bring with him. The constable was along and he arrested Sandy, but they could not do anything with him. The bodies of

the Indians he had shot in the woods had never been robbed; so any one who watched a body never found out who killed him. They could prove nothing against Sandy, and so they let him go. That was a lesson to him. He was mighty sly after that, and although a few Indians were found scattered around through the woods the people seemed to think it was all right, and nobody ever molested Sandy again. Now, Bob, I did not mean that I would serve your father that way, and so I'll say no more about it. Have some more cakes."

"Do you suppose that the Indian's eyes were keen enough to see that man at three hundred yards while he was getting ready to shoot him?" asked Hugh.

"Of course I do," said Mr. Wilkeson, emphatically. "He saw Sandy when he first got up from the bushes. But three hundred yards! It seems to me that that is a good long distance to strike a man between the eyes. But all the Indians that were found in the woods were hit in pretty nearly the same place."

The boys had been paying more attention to the narrative than they had paid to the pancakes, but Mr. Wilkeson proved that he could talk and eat his dinner at the same time. The meal was ended at last, and after the man had received his thirty-five cents apiece from Hugh he pushed back his chair. Mr. Wilkeson told the boys that they would see more of the overflow than they had seen thus far, down the river, for when the water went off it carried the snow with it, and probably they would have to drag their toboggan through the mud. The boys found it so, for almost all the way to Hugh's house they passed through mud that was ankle deep. The water had not been up more than three hours, but they saw the signs of the disaster on every side, and more than once they wondered how the farmers had escaped.

"When we saw the water rising so rapidly we knew that something was the matter farther up the stream, and made all haste to get our cattle out of the way, and our wives looked out for things in the house," said one man who had found it necessary to

move upstairs until the waters subsided. "I tell you we would liked to have had that old man Carter here about that time. He wouldn't have known what hurt him."

"Did you hear of anybody being hurt?" asked Paul.

"No, I didn't hear of anybody," said the farmer. "The stage-driver came up yesterday—he had his sleigh with him and had to walk all the way—and he says everybody is all right at the village. What has become of old man Carter?"

"I don't know. I expect he is at his house."

"Well, his house won't do him a bit of good if some of the men he has ruined get word of it," said the man, with a fierce frown on his face. "I didn't lose but three head of stock, but they were the fattest ones I had. I was going to take them to market next week."

The boys passed on, and about five o'clock they arrived at Mr. Pratt's house. Bob said he wouldn't go in, but bid Paul and Hugh good-by, as if he was never going to see them

again. He felt very lonely after he had parted from them, for if the men who owned the mill looked at it from the same standpoint that he did, his chances of finding employment in the new mill, which would go up immediately, were slim indeed. And Bob did not know where he was to look for work if his present job was taken away from him.

"Why, Hugh, you don't know how glad I am to see you," exclaimed his mother, as she rushed down the steps to meet her boy; and to show how overjoyed she was she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "You wasn't there when the dam broke, were you? Now tell me all about it. Leave your hunting rig right out here until you tell me all that I want to hear."

Hugh did not have much to tell, of course, for he and Paul were not there when the dam broke. All he knew about it was that when he got back to the mill after shooting the wild turkey the ruin had been done, and old man Carter had skipped.

"I tell you that it was lucky for him that he did get away," said Hugh, in conclusion.

"We stopped to see all the farmers as we came by, and there wasn't one who felt kindly toward him."

"Well, there wasn't anybody injured?" said Mrs. Pratt. "I am glad of that, but I should think the farmers would be awfully provoked at a man who suffered the dams to break. Why, he was hired to keep watch over them!"

"Now, mother, have you got anything to eat?" asked Hugh. "We'll go out and turn our decoy loose—but you have not seen our wild one yet."

Mrs. Pratt accompanied the boys to the door and watched them while they unstrapped the wild turkey and removed the slats to let their tame one go free. Of course the latter was glad to have the free use of his legs once more, and the first thing he did was to spread his wings and utter a gobble long and loud. His long ride and the cramped manner in which he had been confined had not hurt him in the least. But the wild turkey was the one which engrossed Mrs. Pratt's attention. Now that she had heard from the mill and all

along the road and knew that no one had been hurt by the overflow, she could afford to take some interest in what the boys had done. She tried to lift the turkey from the floor, and found that it was too heavy for her to manage.

"Wait until you have carried that fellow for three miles on your back and see how it will ache," said Hugh, shouldering the turkey and leading the way into the kitchen. "That's what Paul and I did, and I wished him safe right down there," he added, placing him on the table. "But I wish there was another one that we could go after to-morrow."

The boys were so tired from their long walk through the mud that they were not long out of bed that night. They talked with Mrs. Pratt about their fathers, and found that they were all right. They had sent word up by the stage-driver, and he had stopped to deliver it. It had cost them four hours of good hard work to save their lumber, and they were anxious to hear from Paul and Hugh. They knew that the boys had gone after the turkey, and they were impatient to know something about them.

"I guess it is a lucky thing for everybody that the dams broke when they did," said Hugh, as he stood with a candle in his hand preparatory to going to bed. "No one was hurt, and that is something to be thankful for. The stage-driver will be along to-morrow, and we'll go in with him. Good-night."

The next morning the boys were up long before the stage-driver arrived, and then there was something decided upon that did not suit Paul Smith very well. It was settled that Paul was to take the turkey home with him.

"Now hold on, Paul, until I get through," said Mrs. Pratt, when she saw the boy opening his mouth as if about to speak. "Your mother will serve you a nice dinner, and Hugh and Mr. Pratt will be there to help you eat it."

"But *you* won't have any," said Paul.

"No matter. You killed the turkey, and it is nothing more than fair that you should eat it. There comes the stage-driver, so run along, boys, or you will get left. Tell your father that I am well, and that not a drop of that water came on our land. I am glad that he escaped so easily."

Hugh shouldered the turkey and led the way toward the gate, and when the driver saw them coming he held up his horses. He had his wheels this time, and could make much better headway than he could with his sleigh. He did not care for the turkey at all, but listened while the boys told the story of the wreck, and was so long in telling what the farmers and village settlers ought to do with old man Carter, if they caught him, that the town in which Paul lived came within sight before they knew it. The driver carried them home, and Paul was sure, by the way his mother kissed him, that she was glad to see him safe and sound. Mr. Smith and Mr. Pratt were at the lumber yard, and there the boys bent their steps as soon as they told what had happened at the mill. On their way, who should they run against but Percival and Benjamin Morton, who appeared to be greatly delighted to see Paul and Hugh—at least one would have thought so from the way they grinned at them.

"Well, did you see your mill come down the river, as we told you it was going to do?"

asked Percival, who was expected to do most of the talking.

"Did you see it?" inquired Paul.

"No, but we knew something was wrong up there from the way the water came down. I suppose there was some scrambling to get out of the way," said Percival, who would not have been at all surprised if he had learned that half the men had been overtaken by the flow and drowned.

"The men are all right, no thanks to you," said Hugh, who did not want to talk to Percival if he could help it. "We shot the turkey, too."

This was rather more than Percival had bargained for. He looked disappointed, for he was calculating on shooting that turkey himself.

"I'll bet you shot him on father's grounds," said he, and he was so mad that he could scarcely speak.

"Well, we shot him pretty close to the North Lake reservoir, but we didn't see any land 'posted' up there. It may have been on your father's place; I don't know."

"Where was old man Carter, I would like to know," said Benjamin. "He had orders to arrest you if he saw you fooling around our land."

"He would have had a good time doing it," said Paul, with a laugh. "Has he got a warrant as constable?"

"I guess my father can give him a warrant to arrest anybody he catches on our grounds," said Percival. "If he had found you up there you would have passed the night in jail."

"I don't think you will be troubled with old man Carter any more," said Paul. "He has got out of the way of the settlers hereabouts."

"What do you mean by that?"

"He has gone off where people don't know him. He has skipped."

"Skipped! Where has he gone to?"

"If you know so much about him, *you* ought to be able to tell where he is now. You won't see him around here any more; so if you are bound to arrest us you had better get another man to put in his place."

The longer the boys talked the madder they

got, until it seemed that a very slight thing would induce them to come to blows. Hugh stood his ground, determined that if Percival began the fight he would give him as good as he sent; but Paul didn't believe in that way of doing business. He took hold of Hugh's arm and led him away; but Hugh wanted to say a parting word to Percival, and he turned and looked over his shoulder at him.

"The next time you want to hire a man to do your dirty work," said he, "you ought to make some inquiries as to whether or not he is afraid of the rain. That will get old man Carter discharged."

"I'll bet you it don't," said Percival. "Old man Carter will be up to take charge of the new dam as soon as you will."

"Come on and don't pay any more attention to him," said Paul, tightening his grasp on Hugh's arm. "But, Hugh, we didn't shoot that turkey on Morton's grounds."

"I know we didn't, but I said that just to make him mad," said Hugh. "If you hadn't been here we'd have come to a game of fisticuffs before we got through with it."

"It is just as well you didn't. I know you can whip Percival, but we'll wait until he does something to be whipped for. Now we'll go on and see what the folks are doing at the lumber yard."

In due time they arrived at their journey's end, and directed their course toward a comfortable cottage in which the proprietors of the lumber yard were engaged in consultation. One of them was sitting on a stool looking at a piece of paper which he was folding mechanically, and the other was walking up and down with his hands in his pockets. They looked up when the door opened, one took his hands out of his pockets and the other got down from his stool, and they smiled all over as if they were overjoyed to see the boys once more.

CHAPTER V.

AWAITING THE LYNCHERS.

"I DON'T believe it is all right," said Bob Carter, as he left his companions behind him and started for his own home. "That Mr. Smith is very strict about his way of doing business, and my idea will be that he won't have any place left for me when the new dams are completed. My name is Carter, and he will surely leave me out in the cold. Now what is mother going to do for money to pay the doctor? That's what I want to know."

Filled with such thoughts as these, Bob came to a cross-road, down which he turned, and in a few minutes walked over a plank that covered a ditch and opened the gate. It gave entrance to a piece of ground about an acre in extent, and one could see by the way it had been cultivated during the summer that Bob found plenty of work here during the

time he was not employed in the mill. The rose bushes and shade trees were thick in the front yard and all around the house, but the back yard had been relieved of the small crops, which were safely stowed away in the cellar. He opened the door, and there, seated in a chair with his elbow on the table, was his father.

"Why, how did you get home?" asked Bob, after he had greeted his mother. She sat in a rocking-chair with a quilt around her, and her feet resting upon a stool, which Bob had made on purpose for her.

"I just came," was the man's surly reply.

"How did you miss the farmers on the road?"

"When I saw any of them around the house at work I just went into the woods, and so got by them without their seeing me," replied the man. "What do they say about me up at the mill?"

"They say it is lucky for you that you got off," said Bob, who did not believe in mincing matters. "They think you have left the country."

"That's what I allow to do as soon as I can get some clothes—and money. I need some of that, too. Have you got any?"

"Not a cent," said Bob; and then he congratulated himself on having spent all that his mother had, before he went to the mill, on flour and bacon—such things as she would need while he was absent from home.

"Well, they would have had a fine time hanging me," said the man, with a look toward his rifle, which stood leaning against the wall at the back of his chair. "It rained; and I wasn't going out in it to get all wet. Now, what am I going to do?"

"Where's the sixty dollars a month you made taking care of those gates?" asked Bob.

"I have spent it, and I haven't got two dollars to my name," said old man Carter, rubbing his hands in a nervous manner. "I believe you have got some money. Didn't the foreman pay you off when you left up there?"

"He did not. If he had any money he never said a word about it." "I am glad that he did not offer to pay me," thought Bob.

"How much have you got coming to you?"

"Ten or fifteen dollars."

"Well, I want you to get it as soon as you can and pay it over to me; do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear you," said Bob, and the expression which came into his face showed that he did not intend to do anything of the kind. "I think mother can use that money to a better advantage than you can. But, father, why can't you stay at home until this thing blows over? I am as deep in the mud as you are, and I am not afraid to stay here. Besides, somebody has got to look out for mother."

"You are as deep in the mud as I am?" said Mr. Carter in surprise. "Why, how does that come? Have you been discharged?"

"Some of the men at the mill talk about it," said Bob. "I heard one of them say that when the new mill was built—they know, of course, that one will be built right away, although they haven't heard Mr. Smith say anything about it—and the new dams put up, he wouldn't seek employment at the mill if I got a job there."

"Good enough!" exclaimed the man.

"Now why do you say that?" asked Bob, much astonished. "Haven't I got to look out for mother? I can't get anything to do about here."

"That shows that they are afraid of the Carters," said he, rubbing his hands gleefully together. "Say, Bob, did those fellows get that turkey? I wanted to see them do that, for I had instructions to pull them in if they went on Mr. Morton's grounds."

Bob was amazed to hear his father say this.

"I don't know whether they shot him on Mr. Morton's grounds or not, but they got the turkey," said Bob. "Who told you to put them in jail?"

"Well, I got word to do it," said Mr. Carter, who knew better than to tell that it was Percival who had commanded him to keep an eye on his father's grounds. "I went up there in the morning through the rain, calculating that I could tell from the way the gun sounded whether or not they were on their fathers' property, but when I got within two

miles of the South pond reservoir I heard the dam breaking. It came with a roar and a rush—such a sound as I imagine an avalanche makes when she gets fairly started. As soon as I made up my mind what it was I turned on my heel and went back to the North Lake reservoir, and got there just in time to get a few things that I needed and get across the bridge before it broke. But I could look on the lake and see that I wasn't mistaken in the sound I had heard. There was a big wave coming that was ten feet high."

"It wasn't as high as that," said Bob, who was interested in what his father had to say. "It was four feet high, and that was big enough to take off the dam."

"Did it leave any of the mill?"

"Yes, it left the main part, but the addition where the machinery was is all gone. The wave did not leave anything of the dam."

"I don't wonder that the men are down on me," said old man Carter, getting up and walking the floor, "but what could I do in all that rain?"

"The rain didn't amount to much. Paul

and Hugh came up through it all and never minded it in the least."

"Well, they were out for fun, and I tell you there is a big difference in going out for fun and when you have to do it. I have lost my position, and that's all there is about it. Now, Bob, I want you to collect that money as soon as you can."

Bob did not say what he was going to do. He looked toward his mother, who had not taken any part in this conversation, and saw that she had her face buried in her hands. He knew that she was crying silently, but her husband didn't care for that. Bob wished his father would get through with what he had to say and go away. He wanted to talk with his mother and he did not care to have any third party about. But his father wanted to see about that money first. He was going away into the woods, Bob had made up his mind that he would do that, and he needed money to buy some provisions while he was getting some furs.

At this time, while Bob was talking with his father, he heard an impatient yelp, accom-

panied by a scratch on the door which opened into the woodshed, and now he got up and let the hound in. He knew when Bob had come home and was anxious to see him. Of course he made the room resound with his baying, but after Bob had petted him for a few minutes he lay down beside his chair, as if to show him that he could not go out of the room without his going too.

Hector, for that was the dog's name, was great on hunting, and there was one thing he did that created immense amusement among the boys. By that we mean Paul and Hugh, for they were the only ones who went into the woods with him. When they arrived in camp, the first thing he did was to go all around and smell of the different boys who made up the party, and then he would go away and lie down as if he were satisfied. When night came he would go through the same movement again, and if the boys were all there he would lie down again; but if there was one person missing, no matter whether Hector had ever before hunted with him or not, the dog was uneasy and would not stay in camp. He

would hunt all around until he found that missing one's trail, follow it up if it took him all night to do it, find out where he had made his camp, and he never would leave him until he brought that boy safe to his friends. The boys never gave any heed to being lost if Hector was one of their party.

"I wish I could take that dog into the woods with me," said old man Carter. "He would be a heap of value to me."

"Well, you can't," said Bob, who congratulated himself on having at least one thing that his father could not take away from him. "He goes hunting with me, and he don't want to go with anybody else. You could tie him up and take him along with you, but the minute you turned him loose on a track, that would be the last you would see of him."

"What are you going to do with the money?"

"I would a little rather you wouldn't question me too fully on that point, for it is one I don't like to answer," said Bob, fully determined that his father should not know just what he intended to do with the proceeds of his labor. "I shall spend it all on mother."

"And you won't give me none of it? I'll pay you when I get something for my furs."

"And that will be never. You owe me ten dollars now that I never expect to see again."

"I know one way to get it, and mark my words, Bob, I will be even with you for this. I know just how to take the advantage of you and I will do it."

Mr. Carter arose from his chair and went into the kitchen. He was gone a long time, and when he came back he shouldered the bundle which he had brought from the mill, took his rifle under his arm, and without saying good-by to anybody he closed the kitchen door and started for the woods. Bob, to make certain that he had gone, stood at the window and watched him. He had two bundles, and when he left the sitting-room he carried but one. Suspecting the truth, Bob, without saying a word, went into the kitchen, followed by Hector. There was nothing left to eat in the house. Old man Carter had taken even the two slices of toast which Mrs. Carter had laid by for supper. The matches, too, were all gone, and the packages which con-

tained the tea, pepper and salt were also missing.

"Is this the way he intends to take the advantage of me?" thought Bob, and there was an expression which came under his breath that he wouldn't have liked to have his mother hear. "Well, I expect he will get fooled on this if he tries it again."

"Did he take all?" inquired Mrs. Carter, as Bob came in with an armful of wood.

"Now, mother, what difference does it make?" said the boy, putting his wood in the box, and drawing a chair beside his mother. "The grocery store is only three miles away——"

"Then, of course, he has taken everything," said Mrs. Carter. "But, Bob, I am really afraid he will freeze. This weather isn't going to last always."

"Mighty clear of him freezing," exclaimed Bob. "Didn't you see that big fox-skin coat that he has? That will keep him from freezing if the mercury is down to zero. Have you got everything you want?"

"I have everything I want, thank you.

Are you going to the store? You haven't got any money."

"It won't be the first time I have got things there on credit. I will be right back. I will tell the grocery man that I will pay him day after to-morrow morning. Good-by."

Bob, followed by Hector, walked briskly as long as he remained within sight of his mother, but when a turn in the road hid him from view he broke into a trot, which he never slackened until he ran up the steps that led to the grocery store. When he opened the door he found the room filled with hangers-on, as it always is about country stores on stormy days. They were all glad to see him, and before he could do any trading he was obliged to tell his story over again. He did not say anything about his father, for he did not want them to know that he had left the settlement and gone into the woods to live; but it seems that one of them had heard the truth of the matter already. When Bob finished what he had to say this one inquired:

"And where is old man Carter now? He would not go out in the rain, and so he let the

dams take care of themselves. I say hanging is too good for that man."

Bob did not wait to hear any more, but gave the grocer a look which brought him to the rear of the store. He did not like to ask for credit, but sometimes he had to do it.

"I haven't got any money, Mr. Roberts," said he.

"That's all right. What do you want? You have to take care of your mother yet, I suppose?"

Bob didn't like to talk about this either, and so he went on and told the man everything he wanted. He had kept them all in his mind on the way down, and consequently he did not forget a thing, not even excepting half a dozen oranges for his invalid mother. It was quite a large bill of goods which old man Carter had taken out of the house, enough to fill a good-sized basket, and when Bob had taken it on his arm and started for the door one of the hangers-on inquired:

"Where is old man Carter now?"

"I don't know where he is," replied Bob, and he told the truth. He did not know

which part of the woods his father was striking for.

"I guess he will come down to your house before he goes anywhere, won't he?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Well, I have lost a dozen head or so of cattle, and I guess a whack or so with a good stout hickory will teach him to mind his own business hereafter. I suppose you will tell him of that. The dark won't make any difference to us."

"I shall not tell him a thing about it," said Bob, and he opened the door and went out. "If you fellows are going to whip him for what he has done I think you will have to go into the woods to do it," he added mentally. "He didn't want to stay in our house all night, and I don't blame him for it."

Bob could not strike a trot on the way home, for his basket was too heavy, but he had something new to occupy his mind. The settlers were not going to hang his father for allowing the dam to break, but they were going to take him out and whip him. They had probably got all the arrangements made

before he got to the store. He thought the storekeeper was acting the part of a treacherous friend by keeping it all to himself. Why didn't he caution Bob, so that he could warn his father when he got home? He had bought provisions of that man ever since he had been in business, and he thought it would be nothing more than fair for him to say a word to Bob and thus put him on his guard.

"One of them couldn't keep his mouth shut, and I shall expect those men to visit the house to-night," soliloquized Bob, changing his heavy basket to his other arm, "and we will see how much they will make by it. I wish I could keep it from mother, but if I do, it will scare her to death when the men come there."

This was a question that Bob turned over in his mind a good many times on the way home, and the conclusion at which he arrived was that he had better take his mother into his confidence. She would know it after the men came there at any rate, and he thought he had better tell her beforehand, so that she could be on the watch for them. By the time

he made up his mind to this he arrived within sight of Hugh Pratt's home. The curtains were up, and he could look in at the window and see the boys eating their supper. Everything was quiet and peaceable in their home, there was nobody running off into the woods to escape vengeance at the hands of his near neighbors, and Bob almost envied them.

"It is nice to be rich," thought he, as he dashed his hand across his eyes. "But there is one thing about it: Paul's father and Hugh's were just as poor as I am, in their younger days, and they did not get their riches by just wishing for them. They went out into the woods and worked hard before they saw their way clear, and why should not I do the same? I've got health, and I can swing an axe as well as anybody. I know that if there is a chance for one there is a chance for another, and I am bound that I won't stick to that circular saw any longer than I can help. I am determined to get ahead some way or other."

When Bob opened the door of his own domicile he was greeted by his mother with a

smile, which drove all thoughts of Paul Smith and Hugh Pratt out of his mind. There was not a boy in that settlement, or in any other, who had a parent so glad to see him. Hector gave a friendly wag of his tail and stretched himself out in front of the stove, while Bob produced from his basket the half dozen oranges that he had bought for her.

"Say, mother," said Bob, as if he hardly knew how to go about the business, "I've got something to tell you. I heard it down at the store from the loafers gathered there."

With this introduction Bob went on and told what the men had said about his father, that they were going to whip him instead of hanging him, and that the darkness of the night wouldn't make any difference to them. They were coming up there that night, and his mother must be prepared for them.

"It is hard work for me to tell you this, but I think you had better know it," said Bob. "You won't be so surprised to see them."

"I don't know how I can stand it," said his mother, burying her face in her hands.

"He never can stay in this community after he has been whipped."

"Of course he can't; and I think the best thing he can do is to go away and stay until the thing blows over. It will get all cold after a while, and then he can come back."

"But the idea of your father being threatened with a whipping," said his mother between her tears. "That is more than I can bear."

"Well, if you are going to take on this way I shall be sorry that I told you," said Bob, who was greatly concerned for his mother.

"It is better that I should know it. I have stood a great deal from your father, but this blow will almost kill me."

"Don't you see that they can't do anything to him?" asked Bob. "He is deep in the woods by this time, and if you put father in the woods you can't catch him. He used to be a hunter, you know."

Bob selected one of the oranges for his mother, gathered up his basket and went into the kitchen. He did not want to stay in the

dining-room while his mother exhibited so much emotion.

"I tell you I don't want father whipped," said he, and every time he thought of it it seemed to him that he could not possibly contain himself any longer. If his father had been there he would have fought as hard as anybody to save him. "He has lessons enough. I don't believe he would take charge of the new dams even if it was offered to him. He would know better than to go up there and face the looks of those men."

It was Bob's plan, when making a fire in the kitchen, to strike up a whistle; but there was no whistle for him now. He was ill at ease, that was plain enough to be seen, and he did not want to go back to his mother with that look on his face. He built the fire, arranged in their places the provisions he had brought from the store, and proceeded to get supper. He kept that man's words wandering in his mind, and the longer he thought of them the better-natured he became. His father was away, they could not catch him now, and by the time the men had opportu-

nity to think the matter over they would get out of the notion of taking vengeance on him.

"This doesn't sound like you out here, Bob. Where's your whistle?"

The boy looked up, and there was his mother standing in the door, smiling as she used to do before that disaster at the mill happened. She had missed Bob's favorite whistle, and had come out to see what was the matter.

"Why, I have had so many things to think of that I couldn't strike a note," said Bob, smiling. "Sit down, mother. Supper will soon be ready, although I confess it is rather late for you."

"I suppose those men will be awful mad when they don't find your father here," said Mrs. Carter, seating herself in the nearest chair. "I imagine they will be mad at you."

"At me? They can't be, for I didn't have any hand in sending father off to the woods. He thought the matter up himself when he saw how mad the men were."

Bob tried in various ways to relieve his

mother of all anxiety with regard to the vengeance of the men who would certainly call at their house before morning, and to some extent he succeeded; for now and then he said something that made her laugh in spite of herself. Supper was ready in due time, and during the meal Bob entertained his mother with the story that Mr. Wilkeson had told the boys while they were eating dinner at his house.

"I remember that man when I was a little girl," said Mrs. Carter. "He was always morose and sullen, and did not seem to want to talk to anybody. The only time he was at his ease was when he was shooting some Indians that he had something against."

"But did you hear what the Indians did to get him down on them?" asked Bob.

No, Mrs. Carter could not remember a thing about that. She only recalled that he hated Indians as bad as he did a rattlesnake. There were the bones of a good many Indians scattered about in the woods, his father had found some of them, and the men who knew Sandy best laid it all to him. When supper

was over Bob wiped the dishes and put them away, and then he and his mother went into the dining-room, with Hector for company.

"I don't believe I will go to bed at all to-night," said Mrs. Carter. "I will sit in my chair."

"All right," said Bob, who never thought of opposing anything his mother decided upon. "I will make up a big fire in the stove and lie down on the lounge, and Hector will tell us when anybody comes."

This arrangement was duly carried out, and by nine o'clock the lamp was turned down, and the two were waiting for the arrival of the men. Neither of them fell asleep, for their minds were too busy with other matters.

CHAPTER VI.

PAUL SMITH AT HOME.

FOR three hours everything was quiet in the house—everything except Hector, who seemed to know that there was something going on. When Bob looked toward him he saw that his head was pillowed on his great forefeet, that his eyes were wide open, and that he was keeping them fastened with a steady gaze upon the door. At length he slowly and cautiously arose to his feet, and with the bristles on his neck all sticking up he approached the door and placed his nose close to the crack. He held this position but for a moment and then backed off, and a bay that would have awakened the soundest sleeper echoed through the house.

"Bob!" said Mrs. Carter, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, ma'am."

"They have come. Perhaps you had better get up and open the door for them."

"Mother, if it is all the same to you, I'll let them knock," replied Bob, indignantly. "They will not find any man they want here."

A minute afterward hasty steps sounded on the porch, and a strong hand was laid upon the door knob; whereupon Hector's bays sounded louder than before.

"Who's that?" asked Bob.

"Open up in the name of the law," said a voice from the outside.

"That's Tom Jennings," whispered Bob to his mother. "I know him in spite of the efforts he has made to disguise his voice. He is the one who told me that they would be up here to-night, and that the darkness wouldn't make any difference to them. Now let's see what they will do when they get in."

Bob seized Hector with one hand and opened the door with the other, and instantly two men with rifles in their hands stepped over the threshold. Their faces were blackened, but Bob easily recognized them as some

of the hangers-on he had met at the store. They looked all around, but could see nothing of old man Carter, although they acted extremely nervous, as if they were afraid that his rifle might be covering them from some obscure corner. The moment they got in they moved to the right and left, and a dozen other men, all with hickory switches in their hands, came in to back them up.

"We beg your pardon for calling upon you at this hour, Mrs. Carter, but we want to find that old man of yours," said the foremost. "Now if you will tell us where he is we won't have to search for him."

"He is on his way to the woods," answered Mrs. Carter.

"To the woods? How long has he been gone?"

"Four hours at least."

"Mebbe that's so and mebbe it ain't," said one of the men, flourishing his switch in the air. "We want to give him one lick to pay for the cattle we have lost, and then we'll go home satisfied. We shall have to search the house, since his wife will not give him up."

THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE ARRIVE.

"The house is your own now," said Bob, retaining his hold upon Hector with difficulty. "But if I was a dozen men I'll bet you wouldn't go through it."

"Bob, let them do their worst," said his mother; and this made the boy keep a still tongue in his head. The sooner they had searched the house and found nothing there, the sooner they would go away.

"Yes, I guess that Bob had better keep quiet. Now you two with guns stay right here, and I'll let in the men from the outside. After that we'll search the house."

The man walked across the dining-room floor and unfastened the door of the wood-shed, and eight or ten other men stepped in. Twenty stalwart men to capture one solitary individual! Bob thought that they were in earnest.

Without any further remarks from either side the men scattered through the house, Bob holding fast to Hector with both hands, and trying his best to find out who the men were who had blackened their faces so poorly that one who had ever seen them before would

certainly recognize them. He found that he could tell everyone of them. They had always been on good terms with his father, but the loss of their cattle had enraged them. They looked under the beds, peeped into closets, and went down cellar and up into the garret; but no old man Carter was to be found.

"I tell you, Jennings, we made a mistake in not coming up here at once," whispered one; "then we could have caught him, but now he has stepped out into the woods, and nobody can catch him there."

"Will you say something to Mrs. Carter for the trouble we have caused her? I don't like to speak again, because my voice will betray me."

When the house had been searched from top to bottom the men met in the sitting-room, the faces of all of them betokening disappointment. They had confidently expected to take satisfaction out of old man Carter, and to think that he had slipped out of their hands was provoking. They had seen Mr. Carter when he came home, and that was the

time when they ought to have followed him up.

"Well, the rogue we want to find doesn't happen to be here," said the man who had agreed to apologize to Mrs. Carter; "he has gone somewhere."

"I told you that he had gone into the woods," said Bob's mother.

"Women like you sometimes tell the truth and sometimes they don't. We have left everything just as we found it; we haven't tumbled your clothes about at all. Good-night."

The men all went out, and Bob released Hector. He drew a long breath of relief.

"Thank goodness, it is all over," said he, drawing a chair close to his mother's side. "You see they didn't use me rough, didn't you? They wanted father, and nobody else. But I tell you they were bound to whip him."

Mrs. Carter, although she had controlled herself very well while the men were present, covered her face with her hands and cried silently. Bob said everything he could think of to induce her to look on the bright side, but for a long time his efforts were unavailing.

"I know they can't catch him here, but they may catch him in the woods. If they do, they will whip him to death."

"I say the men don't live who can catch him while he is free," said Bob, earnestly. "He has been a hunter too long, and the man who approaches him——"

"Yes, I understand what that means," said Mrs. Carter. The man who tries to capture him now will come to his death. Don't you see that that would place your father in a worse plight than he is in now? He would have the whole country down on him, and he would stand a fair chance of being hanged."

Bob was obliged to confess that that was so, and he saw that it worried his mother exceedingly, and he looked all around the room as if to hit upon some subject that would draw her mind away from it.

"Jennings is at the bottom of this matter," said he. "I recognized his voice the minute he spoke, and I knew it when he was whispering to that man. Now, mother, we can undress and go to bed. There'll be nothing more to trouble us to-night."

Bob was not long in acting upon his own suggestion, and in fifteen minutes more he was sound asleep. He did not know any more until Hector came into his room and awoke him. It was then just daylight, and Bob, knowing that he had a long walk before him, was soon at work in the kitchen getting breakfast. His mother came out shortly afterward, but Bob made her sit down in a chair and watch him.

"It is a long distance to the place where Mr. Smith lives," said she, as Bob cut the bacon and placed it over the stove in a frying-pan, "and you will be tired out before you get there. Are you going in the stage?"

"No, ma'am, I am not," replied Bob. "I haven't got any money."

"Don't you think he would trust you until you get your money?"

"I am quite sure he would, but I shall not ask him. I don't like to run my face when I can help it. Besides, Paul and Hugh are going home to the village on that stage, and I would rather not have them pay my way. It looks too much like a dead-beat."

Bob's mind was made up, and his mother did not try to change it. After breakfast he put on the only good suit he had and sat near the window, so that he could see the cross-road along which the stage passed. He saw the two boys in it, and then began to make ready for his journey, which he did by pulling the collar of his coat up around his ears, pulling his hat a little lower down and putting on his mittens. Gloves were things that Bob did not own.

"Bob," said his mother, as she watched these preparations, and thought how inadequate they were to keep out the cold wind that was blowing, "I wish you had half the money that fox-skin coat cost your father. You would then be able to get a coat suitable to go out in, in weather like this."

"I am not cold in the least," replied Bob, with a smile. "I walk fast, and so keep warm. Good-by. You are not afraid to stay here alone. I'll be home to-morrow night, sure."

"But where will you stay to-night?"

"Oh, there are plenty of places in the vil-

lage where I can lie down, and get breakfast in the morning, all for fifty cents. That will be cheaper than lying out-doors."

"Bob," said his mother, earnestly, "don't you try that."

"Now, mother, I am not so fond of saving money as that comes to," said Bob, with a hearty laugh. "I am not going to lie out in the cold when I can get a roof to shelter me. Old fellow, go there and lie down," he added, for Hector had stood up in front of him, silently wagging his tail. "He can follow a trail, no matter how old it is, and you had better keep him in the house all day."

Hector hung his head and went slowly around behind the dining-room stove and settled himself in an attitude of rest. He drew a long sigh, as if to say that he didn't approve of that arrangement at all. The boy kissed his mother, and then struck a merry whistle and went out.

"I told mother that I wasn't cold a bit in this rig," said he, as the fierce north wind struck him, "but I find that I shall have to go faster than this to keep warm. She is

watching me," he added, as he turned about and waved his hand to her as she stood at the window, "so I must go easy for a while."

When he reached a place in the road where the bushes shut his house out from view he broke into a trot, but he could not get out of sight of the havoc occasioned by that disaster at the mill. The road was cut up, the logs which had been confined above the dam a short time prior to its breaking were strewn high and dry along the bank, fences had been carried away, and every one of the farms which he passed bore evidence to the furious torrent that had swept along there a few hours before. Bob did not wonder that the farmers were angry. If he had had the proceeds of years of toil wiped out in that way he would have been angry, too.

"I don't blame the farmers for wanting to take vengeance on father," soliloquized Bob, looking around, for fear that he would meet some man who would inquire where old man Carter was now. "Of course if he had been in the house last night I would have fought for him. Hector would have had a

chance, too; but then the men would have shot him and knocked me down, and I guess it was best the way it was."

Bob did not see any of the men who had lost cattle, and after keeping up his run for two miles or more he came to a place where the banks were comparatively higher, and there the water had been compelled to follow the channel. He kept on his way, paying no attention to time, and never once stopping for his dinner—what would be the use of stopping when he had no money to pay for it?—and it was four o'clock in the afternoon when he arrived at the village where Paul Smith lived. He thought at first of going straight to the lumber yard and asking Mr. Smith for his money, but after revolving the subject in his mind he thought that he had better call upon Paul and see what he thought about it. Mr. Smith and his partner had lost full fifty thousand dollars, and he did not know what a man who was that much out of pocket would think of a boy, and that boy the son of the man who had created all that disturbance, who could come there and ask him for wages

that had been earned at the mill. So Bob kept on down the road that led to Paul Smith's house, and on the way who should he meet but Percival and Benjamin Morton, the very boys of all others he did not want to see. As usual, Percival began the conversation.

"Halloo, Bob," said he, his eye lighting up with pleasure at the sight of him. "You are another fellow that is out of a job, ain't you?"

"How so?" inquired Bob. He did not speak in as friendly terms as Paul and Hugh did when addressing the two boys. Bob Carter was not a boy of peace. It would not have taken more than two words to bring on a fight between them, and Percival saw it on the instant.

"Why, we heard that your mill had been carried away," said Benjamin.

"Who told you so?"

"I am sure I don't know. It is in everybody's mouth; and, besides, we saw the water coming down here. We knew that your father couldn't raise all that water by just simply hoisting the gates."

"Well, if anybody tells you that the mill is carried away, you just tell him that he don't know what he is talking about."

"Oh, that story is false," said Percival, looking astonished. "We have seen the lumber——"

Percival suddenly paused, for the coat which enveloped Bob's figure was unbuttoned and flung upon the snow, his cap was settled firmly on his head, and in two seconds more Percival would have measured his length where he stood if Benjamin had not interfered.

"Hold on, Bob," said he, growing pale. "We mean that it isn't true."

"Yes, of course, that's what we mean," said Percival, retreating a step or two. "I didn't mean it was false."

"The next time you want to be a little more careful in your language," said Bob, returning and picking up his coat. "It takes a bigger man than you are to tell me I lie."

Bob hastily resumed his discarded wearing apparel and went on his way to Paul Smith's house and the brothers resumed their walk,

looking back now and then to see that Bob was not following them. They had a narrow escape, they could see that, and it was a long time before they recovered their wits so that they could speak.

"What do you suppose he meant by saying that the mill wasn't carried away?" said Benjamin.

"He's a liar and the truth is not in him," said Percival. "I just wish I had the strength to tell him so to his face. How quick he got ready for a fight, didn't he?"

"Yes, he was all cocked and primed for it. I never saw a boy who was so anxious to fight as Bob Carter. But I guess he would rather eat than fight now. Bob hasn't had any dinner."

"What makes you say that?"

"Why, he has not any money to pay for it. Every cent he makes goes to pay a doctor's bill for that old mother of his. I wish you had held your tongue a little longer. We wanted to find out about that turkey, and, better than all, we wished to find out where his father is now. If they were on our land

when they shot that turkey, if they did shoot him at all, we want to find out why Carter didn't arrest them."

"That's so; but when I get mad I speak before I think. Let us go up to old man Carter's, and find out where he is. We can take our toboggan along, just as if we were going hunting, and nobody will ever know the difference."

Benjamin was highly in favor of this, but when they came within sight of the post-office, which was the place to which they were going, they found there a neighbor of Mr. Carter's, who, by the way, was one of those who visited the house the night before. He was talking earnestly, and wishing that he and his friends had been a little earlier when they visited the Carter domicile.

"That boy of his'n came up to the store while we were talking about it," said the farmer, who grew so angry that he walked up and down the floor of the post-office, "and Jennings, he couldn't hold his tongue. He had to go to work and tell the boy that we were coming up to his house to catch old man

Carter and give him a good licking for all the cattle we had lost; but when we got there the old fellow had gone, plague take his picture."

"Did you go up to the house?" asked one of the men, who was deeply interested in what he had to say.

"Yes, we went in it and all over it, but we couldn't find hide nor hair of old man Carter."

"Do you know where he is now?" asked Percival.

"He has gone off to the woods, most likely."

"Well, whereabouts in the woods is he? The woods is pretty big, and if you have got to hunt all through them until you find him you'll have a time of it."

"He is up about Jock's Lake, somewhere," said the farmer. "I'll bet I could find him to-morrow, but you see there ain't nary man that wants to go."

"He has got a rifle that has knocked over many a deer in these woods," said one of the listeners. "You are afraid of that, ain't you?"

"Well, I guess you would be afraid of it, too, if you had been in his house last night," said the farmer, when the laughter that was occasioned by the bystander's allusion to the rifle had ceased. "The men were all ready for business, and if we had come upon him he would have found it mighty difficult to lie down after we had got through with him."

"Do you know whether Paul and Hugh shot that turkey or not?" inquired Benjamin.

"I heard that they shot one, but I didn't see it."

"Do you know whether they shot it on their fathers' land or on ours?"

"I didn't hear. What difference does that make?"

"It makes just this much difference," said Percival: "if they shot that turkey on their fathers' grounds it is their turkey; but if they stepped over the line and shot it on ours, they will find themselves in jail."

"Why, how does that come?" said the farmer, while a good many of the listeners who had turned away came back to hear what

Percival had to say. "Who's going to arrest the boys?"

"Old man Carter."

"Is he a constable?"

"No; but my father can say who shall hunt on his grounds and who shall not."

"Haw, haw!" said the farmer, fairly doubling up with laughter. "Put two boys in jail for hunting on ground that isn't posted? Well, if old man Carter wants to keep out of the hands of the law the best thing he can do will be to keep his clutches free from those boys. Why, I shoot on your father's land every time I go hunting."

"You are different," said Percival, who wished now that he had not spoken quite so freely. "Father has not got anything against you, but he wants Paul and Hugh to keep away from there."

The man turned on his heel and walked away, and Percival, seeing that the men who had been listening to the farmer in the first place laughed every time they caught a glimpse of him, glanced into his father's box and then left the post-office.

"I just know that father has the right to say who shall hunt on his grounds," said Percival, who showed a disposition to take the back streets. "His sporting paper deals largely on this subject, and when I asked him why he didn't put a stop to everybody hunting on his lands, he said he would think about it."

"And you took that for his consent, and offered old man Carter five dollars for arresting those boys," said Benjamin.

"Of course I did, and I expect he will back me up. Let us go up and see if we can find old man Carter. Perhaps we will find out whether or not they were on our lands when they shot that turkey. I tell you, Ben, I hate to give that turkey up. We have just as good a right to it as Paul Smith has."

This gave the brothers something to talk about while on their way home, and meanwhile Bob Carter had reached the house where Paul Smith lived and rang the door-bell. It was almost instantly opened by Paul himself, who was clad in dressing-gown and slippers, and seemed in a fair way to take his evening comfortably.

"I knew it was you the minute I saw you go past the window," said Paul, holding the door wide open, so that his visitor could enter. "Why don't you come in?"

"I guess I had better not go in," said Bob, glancing down at his feet. "I am all snow. But, Paul, I want to ask you a question."

"Well, here I am. Fire away."

"I wonder if your father would be willing to give me the fifteen dollars he owes me for work at the mill," asked Bob, who could hardly bring himself to utter the words. It looked very strange, he thought, to ask a man for his money who had always been ready to hand him his wages as soon as earned.

"Why, of course he will. Come in, and don't keep me standing in this cold air any longer."

"Thank you, but I guess I won't go in. I will stay here while you go and get it."

Paul waited to hear no more. He stepped down from the threshold and took Bob by the arm and fairly led him into the house. Everything was warm and comfortable there, even in the hall. The carpet gave out no

sound as he stepped upon it, and the big arm-chairs extended their arms invitingly, as if urging him to occupy them. Bob was more than half-inclined to seat himself in one of the chairs, but Paul had taken a firm grip on his arm and pulled him along toward the door of the sitting-room.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SMITH'S LIBERALITY.

"FATHER has not got home yet, but he will be here in a few minutes," said Paul, taking the hat from his friend's hand—for Bob knew enough to uncover his head upon entering a strange house—and hanging it on the rack. "There's nobody in the dining-room but Hugh and I. Now, is this the only thing that brought you down here to-day?"

He had heard in a roundabout way that some of Mr. Carter's neighbors had taken the law into their own hands, probably the stage-driver had told it, and had come to his house with hickory switches on purpose to take revenge on him, and he wanted to know whether Bob had come down there with the intention of arresting any of his visitors. He thought that the best plan would be to get

Bob away by himself, so that he could talk without fear of being overheard.

"Let us go up into my room and then we will be safe," continued Paul, as Hugh got up from his chair and shook hands with Bob. "I've got a good fire up there, and there we can do what we please."

Bob was much relieved to find himself in Paul's room, with the door shut, for it took him away from the rest of the family, and, better than all, it took him out of the reach of Paul's sisters, whom he did not care to see. Everything about Paul's room was like himself. Although it was neatly furnished, there was not a thing in it that was too nice to handle. Paul and Hugh listened while he told of his visit to the grocery store to get some provisions for his mother, but he did not say anything about the men coming to his house with hickory switches. The boys waited in vain for him to speak of it, but as Bob kept away from the subject, Paul and Hugh thought they would keep away from it, too. At the end of half an hour there were sounds of heavy steps on the porch,

and the gruff tones of men came to their ears.

"There's father," said Paul, jumping up. "Now come on, and ask him about your money."

"You go," said Bob. "I—I don't like to. Your father has got company, and I wouldn't care to ask him for money in the presence of an outsider."

"That's nobody but Hugh's father, and you surely are not afraid of him," said Paul. "But if you are determined that you won't go, I will do the best I can."

Paul opened the door and went out, and in a few minutes the boys heard him coming back again.

"You will have to go yourself, Bob," said he. "Those men want to question you about the way you left the mill. They haven't set eyes on you for—oh, I don't know how long."

Bob reluctantly arose from his chair and followed Paul down the stairs. Before the fire sat a couple of men, one of them dressed like Paul, in gown and slippers, and they seemed

to be in the best of spirits. The faces they turned toward Bob did not look much like that of men who had lost a fortune by his father's laziness.

"Halloo, Bob," said Mr. Smith, extending his hand. "You seem to have got out of the mill all right. Paul says you want your money. There it is. I have just counted it out for you. Put that in your pocket."

"Well, Bob, how did you leave everything up there?" asked Mr. Pratt. "There wasn't anybody hurt, I believe. Has the mill all gone?"

"No, sir," said Bob, paying no attention to the chair which Paul pushed up toward him. "The mill itself is all right, but the addition, where the machinery is located, is all gone. The foreman is at work getting the machinery out."

"Well, that is better than I thought," said Mr. Pratt, with something that sounded like a long-drawn sigh. "The boys told us about that, but they were so excited that we didn't hardly believe that they knew what they said. Why did not you stay up there and do work

with the rest? Your pay would have gone on."

"But I wanted to see how mother was," said Bob.

The boy thanked Mr. Smith for his money and was about to turn and go out, when Paul's sisters came in. They were very handsome girls, but Bob seemed out of place in their company. They shook hands with him, congratulated him on his escape, although Bob himself did not think he had a very narrow one, asked after his mother, and Mr. Smith, seeing that he was anxious to take his leave, said:

"Well, Bob, I guess that is all. Paul will tell you what other thing we have decided on."

Bob accordingly went out, and when the door closed behind him he told himself that he would rather be in danger of being swept off by the wave that threatened destruction to the mill than to be in company of two pairs of girls' eyes which seemed to read his inmost thoughts.

"I guess I will go now, Paul," said he, taking his cap from the peg on which it hung.

"Where are you going?" asked Paul, taking the cap from Bob's hand and hanging it up again. "You surely are not going home to-night?"

"No, it is most too far; but I thought I would go up and stay with Keller all night. It won't cost much."

"Well, you can't go," said Paul, once more taking a grip on Bob's arm and leading him up the stairs. "Didn't you hear what father said about some other little things that he had decided upon? I've got to tell you what they are."

"That will not take more than five minutes."

"Oh, yes, it will. It will take me all this evening and to-morrow morning, too," said Paul, opening the door of his room. "Hugh, now that this fellow has got his money he wants to shake us."

"No, I don't," said Bob, hastily. "But I have got all done with you now."

"Yes, I know; and now that you have got done with us you want to give us the go-by. Sit down there. Now, Hugh, tell him what father told us to-day."

Hugh settled himself in his chair, folded his hands and crossed his legs, after the manner of a lawyer who was about to expound some legal point, and revealed a proposition that, before it was ended, almost took Bob's breath away. For two weeks they were to go on a hunt up about Jock's Lake. There would be nothing for them to do in the meantime, and Mr. Smith had agreed to let Bob go with them. They would take Bob's dog along and try to get some deer. They would go far back in the woods, and noboby would see or hear of them until the two weeks were up. Bob did not see anything unusual in this, but Hugh finally said:

"Your pay will go on just the same."

"Well, Hugh, that won't be fair," said the boy, as soon as he could speak.

"No matter. You don't have to pay the money, and if Mr. Smith thinks he can stand it, I don't see that you have any reason to complain."

Bob, who had remained standing during Hugh's speech, took the chair that was pointed out to him, sat down and thought about it.

He knew that Mr. Smith could stand it, and it would be better than going around to look for work. He didn't believe he could find any, that was the long and short of it; but by going into the woods he might be able to find out what had become of his father. If he could carry home word to his mother that Mr. Carter was all right, that he was taking furs and killing game enough to subsist him all winter, his mother would be greatly relieved. She seemed to think that he would freeze to death in the cold snap that was coming, and if he could find his father safe in camp she would have one less thought to worry her.

"It did not take Hugh more than ten minutes to explain what your father said to him," said Bob, turning to Paul. "I'll do it certainly, and I thank him and you——"

"We had nothing to do with it," said Paul, as if such an idea had never occurred to him.

"You didn't?" said Bob, with a smile. "You planned the hunt, and when you were talking it over didn't you say to your fathers that you could get along better if you had Hector to follow up your deer?"

"Well, yes; we did say something about that."

"And didn't you tell them, too, that I could not go to the woods with you because I would have to earn some money for mother? This fifteen dollars wouldn't last forever."

And right here was another thing that Bob did not speak of, because he didn't know it. When Paul went down stairs to see his father about Bob's money he did not neglect to say a word for the boy who was afraid to come after it. He told him that Bob could not go hunting with them unless he had money enough to take care of his mother while he was gone, and Mr. Smith counted out thirty dollars, twice as much as Bob had earned at the circular saw, and folded it up ready to give to Bob when he came after it.

"Go and tell Bob to come down here; that we want to see him," said he, with a glance at his partner. "We don't want him to think that we hold any ill-feelings toward him on account of what his father has done."

The upshot of the matter was that Bob stayed there at Mr. Smith's that night, and

the bed he got into in the spare room made him think he would never want to get up again. He slept, too, and was surprised when Paul came in to tell him that breakfast was almost ready.

"There is one thing that Hugh forgot to speak about last night," said Paul, seating himself on the edge of the bed. "He is going to write a note to his mother, and you are to take it up and deliver it to her. She must come down here to eat a piece of the last turkey that will ever be killed in these woods. Of course you are going on the stage?"

Yes, Bob rather thought it would be much more convenient to travel that way than it would be to walk all the distance that lay between him and his home. After breakfast he bid all the family good-by, and with Hugh's note safely stowed away in his pocket he started for the post-office to take the stage, accompanied by the boys, who had not made an end of telling him about that hunt on the shores of Jock's Lake.

"Remember now, we shall be at Hugh's house day after to-morrow at two o'clock all

ready to start for the woods," said Paul, "and we want to see you the first thing. What's the matter, Hugh?"

They had by this time come within sight of the post-office, and who should he see on the back seat of the stage, with a toboggan behind them, but Percival and Benjamin Morton. They held their guns in their hands, and were tucked away among the buffalo robes as snugly as though they had settled themselves for a long ride. Hugh uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Well I declare! There are those two fellows ready to go into the woods, too," said Paul, who acted as if he had half a mind to turn around and go back. "You are not afraid of them, Bob?"

"Not much," replied Bob. "They won't say anything to me; you may rest assured of that."

"What do you suppose is taking them into the woods, anyhow?" asked Hugh.

"They will not get that wild turkey, if that is what they are going after," said Paul. "And furthermore, we did not shoot it on their grounds, either."

Percival and Benjamin discovered the boys about the same time, and a hurried consultation took place between them. When our three friends came up they were surprised to be very cordially greeted by them. That was enough to make Paul and his comrades suspicious.

"Are you going to take the stage, Bob?" inquired Benjamin.

"Yes, I am," said Bob, and he almost hoped that Benjamin would say something against it.

"Now that is nice. We will have company all the way."

"Where are you going, anyhow?" asked Hugh.

"We are going up about Jock's Lake to try and get some deer," said Percival. "We know we won't get the turkey, for you fellows shot him. When are you going to eat him?"

Paul did not think it necessary to answer this question, and he immediately entered into a whispered conversation with Hugh and Bob. Those fellows were going up to Jock's Lake after deer, and the first thing that must be decided upon was some way to steer clear of

them. They had never heard of Percival or Benjamin killing a deer, and they did not want to go in their company. While they were talking about it the driver came out, and his loud shout of "All aboard" cut the colloquy short.

"Of course you can ride with me on the front seat, Bob," said the driver. "Jump aboard. Now," he added, as he gathered up the reins and cracked his whip, "tell me all about those fellows coming to your house the other night. They didn't get your father, I know that much."

"Don't talk so loud," said Bob. "Of course you are bound to know everything sooner or later, and I am willing to tell you of what happened; but I don't want those boys behind to know anything about it."

"Between you and I and the gate-post I don't want them to know it, either," said the driver, lowering his voice. "They would blab it all over town."

"Say, Bob," said Percival, for by this time they were clear of the village and he could talk as loudly as he pleased without danger

of being overheard, "where is your father now?"

"He may be at home," replied Bob. "I don't know."

"Yes; but he wasn't at home when the men went there to see him," said Percival. "He went into the woods, and we would like to know where he is now."

"He may be up about Chazy Lake."

"Mighty clear of his going that far when the snow is as deep as it is now," said Benjamin with a loud laugh. "We want to know where he is, so that we can keep away from him."

"There," said the driver. "Them fellows have got onto it already."

"Well, that is the story you told when you got back here," said Bob. "I should have thought you might have kept still about that."

"I told just what was told me at the store," said the driver, in a tone which he meant should clear himself. "I wasn't told to keep the matter still. He was mighty sharp in going away before the men got hold of him."

"I guess he is right up where we want to go," continued Percival. "If we know which side of the lake he is on, we will go on the other side."

Nothing more was said by his passengers in regard to what had become of old man Carter, but the driver did not believe in allowing them to settle down and say nothing. He started conversation on every subject he could think of, but was finally obliged to give it up in disgust. The boys did not want to talk with each other, but Percival and his brother kept up an animated conversation in whispers for a long time. At length the journey's end for which Bob had embarked was in plain sight, and the driver began to show signs of stopping his horses.

"I don't want to get out here," said Bob. "I have a letter for Mrs. Pratt. And you must stop here and take her in in the morning."

The driver cracked his whip again, and in a short space of time drew up at Mr. Pratt's residence. Bob got out, waved his hand to the driver, and went into the house as though he had a perfect right there.

"If that fellow had his deserts I'll bet he wouldn't step his foot on that porch," said Percival in disgust. "My folks are just as good as Bob's ever dare be, and better, too, and we never get an invitation to one of those houses. It seems to me that after I had allowed a man to ruin my mill——"

"Pshaw!" said the driver. "Bob didn't have anything to do with that. His father is the man."

"No matter; his name is Carter, and he ought to be dealt with. He allowed the mill——"

"The mill isn't hurt," exclaimed the driver. "And I want to tell you boys one thing right here before I forget it. Don't you say that in Bob's presence. If you do, you will get into a hard row of stumps."

"I don't believe Bob is such an awful man," said Percival, who just then forgot the little circumstance that happened the day before. "If I could get a good hold of him I could strangle him with a finger and thumb."

The driver laughed loudly, cracked his whip again, and went on his way toward New-

port; while Bob, having completed his business with Mrs. Pratt, came out of the house and started for home. He was more quiet than usual; he did not even whistle, for Percival's talk had suggested something to him.

"Now, what do those fellows want to see father for?" soliloquized Bob, breaking into his usual dog trot, and anxious to reach home as soon as he could. "They want to see him, I know, or they wouldn't be so concerned about him. I hope there isn't anything up between them."

Bob continued to wear an uneasy look upon his face until he came to the plank across the ditch, and then he called a smile to his countenance, but such a smile as it was—it didn't deceive his mother one bit—and opened the door. Hector heard him with his first step on the porch, and greeted him loudly as he walked in and laid his money in his mother's lap.

"Anything been going on here?" asked Bob. That was as near as he cared to come to his father's name.

"Nothing at all," said his mother, proceed-

ing to count the money which Bob had given her. "Mrs. Pratt sent over a very nice dinner yesterday, and I had wood enough to run me until you came back."

"Well, I'm awful hungry just now, I can tell you," said Bob, going toward the kitchen door, "and I'll see if I can scare up something."

"Bob," said his mother, suddenly, "how much did you say that Mr. Smith owed you?"

"Fifteen dollars," said Bob. "Is it not all there? I took it just as he gave it to me and put it into my pocket."

"Why, it is all here, and more, too. Here are thirty dollars."

"What!" exclaimed Bob, coming back and taking the bills from her hand. "Paul got the money for me, and I told him how much his father owed me. But, mother, he never counted that out in mistake. He did it on purpose."

Bob's heart went out in thankfulness to Paul, who had been so careful of his interests, and having counted the bills he handed them

to his mother, and then started for the kitchen once more to see if he could "scare up" a late dinner. There was plenty left over from the dinner that Mrs. Pratt had sent over the day before, but Bob did not touch it. He found some cold bread and bacon, with which he satisfied his appetite, and then went back to his mother. There was any amount of work that Bob could do about the house, and while putting on his working-clothes he came to his bedroom-door occasionally to tell of the hunt that Paul and Hugh had planned to the shores of Jock's Lake.

That interested his mother, of course, but the thing that occupied the most of her interest was the fact that Bob's wages were to go on just the same as though he was at work in the mill.

"I never expected that even of Mr. Smith," said Bob. "I know he has been kind to me, but I didn't look for him to let me go on a hunt with Paul and say I should earn a dollar a day for it. When the two weeks are up I'm coming home, no matter whether the boys do or not."

By the time Bob was dressed he was in splendid spirits, and he struck up a whistle as he grasped a broom and set out to sweep the kitchen. Then there was more wood to saw and bring in, and by the time five o'clock came he was ready to get supper.

The next day he stood at the window while the stage-driver went on his trip, and saw a lady well bundled up in furs sitting on the back seat, and knew that Hugh's mother had accepted that invitation contained in the note of yesterday. If "that old rogue" had never made anybody else happy the last act of being on earth, before he disappeared altogether, he succeeded in making the mill-owners and their families forget the severe loss they had sustained while they were eating him. Many compliments were passed upon Paul for his fine shooting.

"Oh, it was easy enough to kill him, for I had a splendid chance for his head," said Paul, in reply. "You don't want to forget Mrs. Pratt and Hugh. Mrs. Pratt gave us the tame turkey, and that's what brought the old rogue out."

Hector, having made up his mind that his master was not going hunting that day, took possession of his rug behind the sitting-room stove and passed the hours in quiet, while Bob worked steadily at the woodpile. He filled the box as full as it would hold and brought in fuel, so that his mother would not have to go outside to get it; and then his single-barrel needed cleaning. Bob had never thought much of that gun, for it was far inferior to those that Paul and Hugh carried on their hunts; but it did something before he came back that made it hold a high place in his estimation. Wednesday morning came at length, and at half-past two Bob stood at the window and saw Paul and Hugh go by in the stage. A few minutes afterward he put on his hat, and, followed by Hector, started for Hugh's house. Hugh met him at the door before he had time to rap and led him into the kitchen, where Paul was at work demolishing a piece of mince-pie.

"Sit down and have a slice," said Hugh, drawing a chair up to the table. "You are on hand, I see. Well, we shall not go before

to-morrow morning, so be over here as soon after daylight as possible. You ought to have had a piece of that turkey, Bob, and for fear that you would think hard of it we brought home a piece for you. It is there in that basket. You will take Hector with you, of course?"

This was all the boys had to say to him; but there was one thing that Bob wanted to get off his mind, and that was to thank Paul for what he had said to his father. When he began on the subject Paul interrupted him with—

"Oh, that's all right. You see we wanted Hector with us, and we knew that he couldn't go without you went, too; so I just mentioned it to father, and he counted out fifteen extra dollars. Now, I don't want to hear any more about it."

Bob, having finished his piece of mince-pie, started for home, taking the basket with him, and proceeded to get everything ready for the morning. Among other things he told his mother about the sum he owed the grocery-man for the provisions he had bought there,

and suggested that it might be as well to take ten dollars more and deposit it with the man, because it would be just so much to his credit.

"I want to see just where father is," said Bob. "He will come back here after that money, and if you have any he's going to have it. If it is put to my credit in the store he will be just that much out of pocket."

Mrs. Carter did not quite like to do that, but after all she concluded that it was best.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WHITE BEAVER.

THE next morning Bob and his mother ate breakfast by lamplight, and in half an hour more he presented himself at Hugh's house all ready for the hunt. Hugh's mother was there to see the boys off, and she had some pleasant remarks to make about the deer that was to be hauled home for her benefit.

"Now, Paul, you want to shoot close, for I shall have my mind all made up to eat a steak off that deer when you get back," said she. "Do not let him get away from you."

"You may make up your mind to eat a slice of that deer's haunch when we get back, and everybody knows that is better than a steak," laughed Paul as he waved his hand to his mother. "Take a hold, Bob, and let us get along. We won't get lost, you may be

sure of that, while we have Hector to look out for us."

The journey was accomplished without any incident happening that is worthy of note, and we may add that the boys were tired when they got to the place to which they were going—the watershed which kept Jock's Lake from flowing over to become a part of South pond reservoir. The ground was frozen and the toboggan slipped along as easily as though there had been snow for it to pass over, and Mr. Wilkeson's house was reached long before the time for dinner. There were no more stories about old Sandy to beguile the meal, and after resting an hour the boys resumed their journey, and it was four o'clock and already growing dark when they drew up at a camp which they had made during the previous winter. Things wore a very cheerless look when they got there, but without saying a word they went to work to make things look as though somebody lived there. The brush shanty had been the sport of the elements until the roof was all gone, and the charred embers of their last year's

fire lay around in a gloomy sort of way; but Bob swept them all aside and in a few minutes had a fire going, and a pot of coffee was all ready to be boiled. Paul seized his axe and cut down some evergreens with which to renew the thatch, and Hugh tore off the old one and threw it down so that Bob could reach it when he wanted to mend the fire. They all labored hard, and when supper was ready they had a bed of browse about a foot deep spread over the floor of the shanty, with their blankets neatly arranged for their couches. Of course everything was done up in "hunter order," for each one knew what to do, and he did not ask advice of anybody.

"Well, we have got so far along," said Paul, passing his cup for another filling of coffee, "and the next thing is to find the deer. We will have to depend on Hector for that."

After supper the hound began his operations of discovering who was in camp, which he did by smelling of each of the boys, receiving a friendly pat from everyone before he picked out his bed by the fire. The boys, too, did not remain long out of bed, but they

stole off one after another to their blankets, and in a short time they were fast asleep. And their slumber was sound in spite of the fact that their surroundings were so different from home. The hooting of the owls and the barking of a fox did not have any effect on them, although Hector raised his head occasionally and looked into the woods as if waiting for that fox to come nearer. Hugh was the first to cast aside his blankets and sit up. His watch showed him that it was six o'clock, but he replenished the fire before he aroused the others.

"You fellows have not got any work to do and you seem to think you can sleep forever," said Paul, seizing hold of Bob's blankets and pulling them off. "Get up and see it rain."

Hector stretched himself and bayed loudly, and both together they soon got the boys to their feet. It was not raining—it was colder than it was the night before—and Bob, after looking all around and moistening his finger and holding it up to the wind, declared that it was a fine day for hunting. Everything

would be out, and probably they would come across some coon tracks before they got back.

"You can look out for the coons, for their skins will bring you in a dime or two," said Paul. "But I am after deer. I don't want to see anything else."

Breakfast, which was but a repetition of the supper, was not long delayed, and the boys, leaving their camp equipage under the lean-to, started out to see what the day would bring them. But first they wanted to see South pond, which was responsible for all the damage that had been done to their mill and to all the lower country. The hill, or watershed, as they termed it, was not more than two miles across, and in due time they pushed away the bushes and found the pond empty. There was no dam to be seen. When the water started it made a clean breach of everything. The ice, which up to this time had held undisputed sway over the pond, had settled down as the water flowed from under it, and was all broken in fragments. There were nearly forty acres in the pond; it was pretty deep, too, and the boys did not wonder that the other dam

had not been able to sustain it all. The boys glanced at Bob to see what he thought about it, and saw him standing with the butt of his gun on the ground and his chin resting across his hands. He no longer wondered that the farmers came to his house with switches to pay old man Carter for what he had done. He believed that if he had lost any cattle he would have been there, too.

"Now, the next thing is to hunt up the deer," said Hugh. "I propose that Bob keep along the shores of the pond, because if any deer came down to drink during the night he will be sure to strike their trail."

Bob thought this was a good plan and straightway became himself again. He shouldered his gun and went a little further back into the woods, and shortly the boys were all out of sight of each other, gradually working their way around the shores of South pond.

"I don't believe this thing is ever going to blow over," said Bob, as he waved his hand to the hound as if to show him that he was all ready to begin business. "There must have been forty feet of that water if the dam all

broke at once, and I don't see why it didn't take the mill, and the boarding-house, too. If father knows when he is well off he will stay in the woods until they get the new dam built."

For two hours Bob stole softly along, carefully examining every print in the snow, and all this while Hector was out of sight. He seemed to know that the boys were after deer and nothing else, for he crossed several coon and fox tracks, and never paid any attention to them. Every once in a little while Bob would go to the bushes that screened the South pond from his observation, and, pushing them aside, would look up and down the pond as if expecting to see something; but for a long time he saw nothing.

"I guess the sound of the waters when the dam broke scared the deer, and they have gone to a place where they know they are safe," said he to himself. "I never hunted in this woods so long without— What in the world is that?"

Bob had parted the bushes and looked cautiously out, when he saw, not a deer, but an

animal that he had never seen before. It was about half the size of his hound, and it was down at the very edge of the ice, where it had been engaged in slaking its thirst. The animal looked up and down the pond, as if he did not know whether to take to the water, which was flowing by in a stream not more than a foot deep and three feet wide, or go back to the bank whence he came; and while he was meditating about it Bob sank quietly down until nothing but his gun could be seen through the bushes. He concluded that it was a beaver; but then beavers did not roam about in the daytime; and, furthermore, this animal was perfectly *white*, and Bob had never heard of an animal of that description. But there was its broad tail, and it drew itself together until it was not more than half the size it looked to be when it was stretched at full length on the ice.

"I tell you this beats me," said Bob, who did not know whether to shoot or not. The animal was rather a long ways off, and fifty yards was too far for that single-barrel of his to kill; and if he struck it and did not kill

it, the animal would spring into the water, and then it would be safe. He had just about come to the conclusion that he would risk the shot anyway, when the animal turned as quick as a flash and started toward the bank. That was enough for Bob. He waited until there was at least ten feet of ice that the beaver, or whatever it was, would have to struggle over if he was only wounded, and then raised his gun to his face. He had never envied Paul the possession of his famous far-killing gun, but he wished that he had it in his hands this minute. The prize would have been his, sure. He took a quick, steady aim at a point a little in advance of the animal, for he was moving at a lively rate in spite of his short legs, and hoped that some of the buckshot in his gun would strike him in some vulnerable part, and pressed the trigger. An instant afterward Bob was on his feet looking for the effect of his shot. When the smoke cleared away he saw the animal in his death throes, but he did not approach any nearer the edge of the ice.

"I've got him, whatever he is," said Bob,

who was as much elated as if he had killed a deer. "Now where is that Hector, I wonder? He can go out on the ice and not break through, while if I try it, mercy knows where I would bring up."

It is probable that Bob did not know how valuable the skin was that he had secured, for if he had, the ice that covered the shores of South pond would not have restrained him one minute. As if in answer to his mental soliloquy he heard a bay close at hand, and Hector, who had grown weary of hunting in the woods all by himself and was coming back to see what his master might be doing, came into view a moment afterward, and looked all around to find what he had shot at.

"Come here," said Bob, laying down his gun. "Do you see that beaver out there? Well, go out and bring him in."

He seized Hector by the head and held him so that he could see the prize, and presently the hound began to struggle as if impatient to get away. Bob accordingly released him, and Hector did not stop to think whether or not the ice would bear his weight, but plunged

at once into it, and after a few jumps succeeded in reaching the firm ground, and a few jumps more took him to the beaver; but there he hesitated about taking him into his mouth. The beaver had by this time ceased his struggles and lay motionless, and Bob could see for himself that it was a beaver and nothing else.

"Take hold of him and fetch him out," urged Bob. "If it was a deer you would have had him by the throat long ago. Take hold of him, I tell you."

After a few more bays, and running around the game to take a nearer view of him and see what it was, Hector obediently seized him, and finding that the animal did not resist, he brought him to the shore and laid him at his master's feet.

Bob's first care when he reached down and took hold of the beaver was to run his hand over his fur, to see whether or not the animal had been rolling in something to give his coat that color; but he was white as the driven snow. Bob got up and leaned against a tree and looked at him, and just then Hugh came rushing up.

"Did you get him?" he asked.

"I've got something, and I would like to have you tell me what it is," said the lucky hunter, pointing to the beaver. "I have read a good deal of beavers, but I never heard of one being that color."

"Why—by—gracious!" said Hugh, who was taken entirely by surprise. "You have made yourself rich."

"How does that come?" asked Bob.

Hugh did not answer immediately, but raised his gun and fired both barrels in quick succession. It was a signal to Paul to hurry up, for they had something to show him. They waited a second or two, and faint and far off came the answer.

"By George, you have done it now," said Hugh, bending over and lifting the beaver in his hands. "There was a man here last spring, he was a hatter and furrier by trade, who said he would give a hundred dollars for a skin like this. You have shot him fairly in the head, so that you have not ruined it anywhere."

Bob was thunderstruck.

"Do you mean that I have made one hundred dollars by that shot?" he managed to gasp.

"To be sure I do, and Paul will tell you the same when he comes up," said Hugh, slapping Bob on the back. "That skin is worth money, the first thing you know."

As Paul was evidently a long distance in the woods, it took him some time to come up, and Hugh, fairly elated over what Bob had done as though he had done it himself, seated himself at the nearest tree, with the beaver across his knees, and kept repeating to himself "By George!" over and over again. He could not get it out of his head that his companion was so lucky. But after a while this thought wore off and another one came in its place. Bob was worth a hundred dollars easy enough, provided he could keep the fur; but there was his father who would have something to say about it. After pondering the matter for a few minutes Hugh decided that he would speak to Paul about it when he came up.

"Do you know that that dog didn't want

to take hold of him at all ?" said Bob, reaching down to pat the hound. "It was different from anything he had been told to bring to me before."

"I don't blame him," said Hugh. "You didn't know what it was when you shot it, did you ?"

No, Bob did not know what it was until he saw the broad tail and witnessed other actions which told him that it was a beaver, and he thought he would shoot it and see what the boys said about it when they came up. Hugh couldn't put the game down but held fast to it all the while, repeating his favorite expression a good many times, and when at last Paul was heard coming through the woods he laid it down beside him and waited for him to discover it.

"Let me see the deer," said Paul, who was panting loudly from his exertions. "Who shot him ? Why, I don't see any deer at all."

"Well, what do you think of that?" said Hugh, placing the beaver in front of him. "That's worth as much as two or three deer, I guess."

Of course Paul had a great many questions to ask in regard to where the game was when he shot him and how he had managed to get him ashore without breaking through the ice, and when Bob had answered them all, he broke out into a roar of laughter.

"Bob, you have done something nobody ever did before," said Paul, placing his gun on the ground and drawing his hand through the animal's fur. "It is white, ain't it? His hair is white all the way through to his skin. That beaver is worth one hundred dollars."

"Do you know where that hatter lives?" asked Bob.

"No, but I have got his card at home. When he said how much he would give me for a beaver of this color he put his hand into his vest pocket and gave me his address, just as if he thought that I was going to shoot the animal for him. Bob, you are a lucky fellow."

"Well, I am glad to hear it," said Bob, in a tone which implied that he had been waiting a long time for that same luck to come to him. "Now what shall I do with this skin

while we go out and look for deer? Do you think it would be safe if I was to hang it up somewhere?"

"There's no more deer hunting for me," said Paul decidedly. "Don't hang that skin up anywhere. There's a heap of hunters here in the woods, and we don't know who may happen upon it. Take the skin off and stretch it just as you would a muskrat skin, and carry it home with you. It will be safe there."

Bob did not say anything, but he knew just what Paul meant by giving this advice. His father was in the woods somewhere, and how did he know but that he might discover the hide and take it for his own use? That was a matter that was not to be thought of. Mr. Carter had a great deal more money than Bob, and where he spent it all nobody knew. It went for something, and Bob's mother never saw any of the benefit of it; so he picked up the beaver, and carrying it over his shoulder as he would a bag of corn, silently led the way toward their camp. He thought it was pretty hard on him to be

obliged to conceal his "catch" from his father, but he did not see what else could be done under the circumstances.

It was very late when the boys got home but they never thought of dinner, but stood their guns up in one corner and watched Bob while he removed the skin of the beaver. They had not yet had time to get over their surprise, and constantly assisted Bob by muttering their favorite expressions a good many times. Hugh kept saying, "By George! It beats the world how lucky that fellow is," and Paul always joined in with, "It beats the world."

"If you fellows keep on you will make me think I have done something worth boasting of," said Bob with a smile.

"If you don't think so when you have handled the bills that the skin of this beaver is going to bring you, why we'll say we don't know anything about it," answered Hugh. "You see, the only trouble is going to be to put it somewhere so that nobody will steal it."

"And that's the reason we want you to take it home," added Paul. "You see I

shall want to write a letter to this hatter, in the first place, so that we will know right where to send it."

"If I can keep it out of father's hands it will be all right," said Bob, who was the only man he could think of who would want to steal his prize.

"Have you thought of those Morton boys?" asked Paul.

"No," said Bob, who was much astonished.

"Well, you want to think of them, or it is my opinion that you will have some trouble with them."

"Why," said Bob, who paused with his knife in the air, "I can whip them both."

"That isn't the point," said Hugh. "You won't have a chance to whip anybody. The first thing you know your hide will be gone, and how are you going to accuse anybody of the theft? Of course, it would be a state's prison offense, but where's your evidence?"

"I never thought of that," said Bob, resuming his work upon the skin of the beaver. "I will take it home and show it to mother, and I guess she will keep an eye on it."

The boys were perfectly satisfied with this arrangement, and not until the skin of the beaver had been taken off and stretched upon some willows that Bob cut from a neighboring thicket, and hung up where nobody would think of looking for it, did they begin to think of dinner. Often, when Bob was turning the bacon over the fire, he would cast his eyes up toward his prize, and think over the good things he was going to get for his mother when that hundred dollars came safely to hand. He never thought a word about himself. It was true that he needed a good many things, but he concluded that he could work for them at a dollar a day and never draw on that hundred dollars at all. That was intended for his mother.

"Now, boys, we'll take it easy," said Paul, picking out a comfortable position in front of the camp-fire and placing his hands under his head. "One doesn't often have such luck, and we don't want to break in on it by killing such a thing as a deer. By the way, where is Hector? I haven't seen him since we left the South pond."

"Oh, he is all right," said Bob, who had unbounded faith in his favorite. "He is off following some rabbit track. Or perhaps he has run the rabbit into a hole and is hard at work digging him out. He will come up very shortly."

For the rest of the short afternoon the boys laid by and sung songs and told stories until the increasing darkness told them it was high time they were getting supper and preparing to go to bed. Still Hector had not put in an appearance, and even Bob began to feel worried about him. Hector had never been known to stay so long before, and Bob could not rid his mind that something had happened to him. The darkness came on apace and the boys began to think of seeking their blankets when a sound that was neither a bay nor a yelp came out of the bushes, and in a few minutes Hector, hobbling on three legs, came into view. Something told Bob that he was right when he thought that Hector had passed through a pretty severe trial since he last saw him.

"Where have you been to get hurt?"

asked Bob, who always talked to the hound as if he could understand every word he said to him. "Some fellow has beaten him."

"Why, who in the world could have done that?" said Paul in surprise. "Hector never did a thing that was worth beating him for."

Bob did not answer immediately, but was feeling Hector's back and leg to see what the matter was, and the hound continued baying and yelping all the while, as if trying to assist him in his investigations. His back was covered with welts, and some of the force had expended itself on his leg.

"I wish I knew who did this," said Bob, and the boys had never seen him angry before. "If the fellow had beaten me I couldn't feel worse over it."

Hector seemed contented to find himself among friends once more, and at once sought his own bed and went to sleep. It was evident that his injuries were not serious, for after he had tried to tell the boys what was the matter he passed into the land of dreams; but every once in a while he would spring from his couch and bark savagely, just as

though he were passing through the scenes of his punishment again.

"There is one thing about it," said Bob, who had been awakened during one of Hector's dreams, "the boy or man who got into a row with that hound had better keep it still from me."

"Say," said Paul, suddenly, "you said that those Morton boys were up here somewhere, didn't you?"

"Yes; but they could never get close enough to Hector to strike him with anything. It was somebody who knew him, and, by gracious! I did not think of father," he added mentally. "But what could father want to lick him for? He said he wanted him to go hunting."

It was a matter that was much too deep for Bob, and after turning it over in his mind he finally gave it up, and once more settled himself for repose.

CHAPTER IX.

HECTOR BECOMES ENRAGED.

"NOW the next thing is to find old man Carter. Are you certain that you know what part of the woods he hangs out in?"

It was Benjamin Morton who spoke. He had hold of the toboggan, and was going along through the woods, fully two miles from Newport. We left him and his brother conversing with the stage-driver after seeing Bob Carter go into Mrs. Pratt's house as though he had a perfect right there, and during the talk the driver gave them some advice, which the boys did not like to hear. They passed the night in Newport, putting up at a little inn where they always stopped when night overtook them, and where they thought they were welcome; but it was the money they spent that induced the tavern-keeper to open his doors

to them. Of course there was a great deal said about the disaster that had overtaken the folks at the mill, but there was not a word said by either of the boys that could be taken against old man Carter. The idea of his not wanting to go out in the rain was all humbug. He was hired for that purpose, and he didn't care what sort of weather came, he was obliged to go out in it, and control the water that came over the dam. He wanted to get a good supply on so that the lumbermen could run the proceeds of their labor down to the lumber yard, and so the water got the start of him. Did anybody know where old man Carter was now? No, there wasn't one who knew where he was. He was in the woods somewhere, and that was all anybody could say of him. In the morning the boys took their toboggan and went into the woods, determined to find Mr. Carter if within the bounds of possibility. They wanted to find out whose land that wild turkey was on when he was killed. They thought they could make Paul and Hugh some trouble if they shot game on their father's grounds, although their land was not posted.

"Yes," Percival answered in response to his brother's question, "I am quite certain I know where to find old man Carter if he is in these woods at all. You know that marsh, about five miles ahead, which the water runs over every fall. Well, that is a good place for minks and muskrats, and I think we shall find him there. The idea of his going way up to Chazy Lake while the snow is as deep as it is now is absurd. He wouldn't be any safer there than he is here."

The boys trudged along, keeping a bright lookout for game, but they saw nothing. Of course they were sorry that they didn't have a dog, who, ranging far and near, would soon put up something for them to shoot at, and they promised one another that before the next season arrived they would have one that would throw Bob Carter's Hector far into the shade. It was while they were talking on this point, and had made perhaps ten miles from Newport and were surrounded with woods on all sides of them, when a figure a little distance in advance of them stepped behind a neighboring tree out of sight. It was

old man Carter, and he wanted to see who the boys were before he showed himself to them. He peeped around the edge of the tree, and as the boys drew nearer he saw that he had nothing to fear. If they had proved to be Paul and Hugh, he would have remained quietly in his place of concealment and allowed them to pass on without revealing himself; but, as it was, he stepped out into view. The boys were startled at first, but presently the sound of a familiar voice that fell upon their ears took their fears all away, and a pleased smile lighted up their faces. They had stumbled upon the object of their search when they least expected it.

"Howd'-ye," exclaimed old man Carter.

"How do you do, Mr. Carter," cried both boys in a breath.

"I tell you you like to have frightened me almost to death," chimed in Percival. "You came upon us so suddenly."

"Nice fellows you are to go hunting in the woods," said old man Carter with a laugh. "What would you do if you heard a painter scream?"

"I don't know. I expect I should wish myself at home. Say, Mr. Carter, were you around here when that wild turkey was killed?"

"I was down at the reservoir, if that is what you mean. But I know he wasn't shot on your father's grounds."

"Oh, pshaw! That's too bad," exclaimed Benjamin.

"We thought he had been killed on our grounds and we expected to see Paul and Hugh arrested for it," said Percival. "You couldn't stretch a point, could you, and say he was killed on our grounds when he wasn't?"

"Well, no," replied old man Carter with another laugh. "You don't get me in trouble that way for nothing."

"I would give you five dollars for it," said Percival.

"And what good would five dollars do me when I was shut up in jail? Say. Did your father tell you to have them lands posted?"

"Of course he did."

"Well, then, what's the reason he didn't

send a constable up here to do the work? I am a private individual and my word wouldn't amount to anything."

"But when I first spoke to you about a reward you were right in for it. You said you knew it would be an easy matter to catch Paul and Hugh on our lands."

"Yes; but I didn't suppose they were going to be so open and above board about it. They came up here and went into the woods and shot that turkey without any difficulty. Have you heard anything about me while you were at home?"

"I should say so. We heard that you ran away from home to escape a whipping at the hands of some men who went to your house with hickory switches. I wouldn't have done that if I had been in your place."

"What would you have done?"

"I would have stayed right at home and shot some of them."

"Mighty clear of your doing anything of the kind," said old man Carter, and the frown on his face showed that he was getting angry. "You would have done just the

same as I did, only you would have run further than this marsh up here."

"Are you living up at the marsh, Mr. Carter?" exclaimed Benjamin, who was anxious to get the man off on another subject. "We would like to go up and stay with you a little while. We would like to see you trap some muskrats and minks."

"Well, I don't mind your going up there," said old man Carter, shouldering his rifle and starting off through the woods. "You didn't see anything of Bob coming up, did you?"

"Yes, we did. He rode up from the village with us and was as fresh and as chipper as you please. He didn't seem to care that you had been driven away from home."

"No, because you see the men didn't want him," said old man Carter, growing angry again. "Had he been down to ask old man Smith for his money?"

"I don't know. Does he owe him anything?"

"He owes him fifteen dollars."

"Well, why don't you take it?"

"That's what I will do when I catch him."

"I bet you that I would take it," said Benjamin. "The idea of your living out here in the cold where you can't get anything to eat, and Bob's staying there at home with a fire and everything else around him—I tell you it is too much. You have a right to all he can make."

Old man Carter did not say anything to this, but he kept up a thinking all the time. In a few minutes they arrived at his camp, which was nothing more than a lean-to that was not calculated to resist the storms of winter nor the cold blasts that would so soon be upon them. True, everything about the camp was neat, for Carter was an old hunter and knew how to take care of things; but the boys thought he might have taken a little more pains to make himself comfortable. The lean-to was hardly large enough for one to spread his blanket under, and the boys wondered how they were going to do when night came.

"Now, then, I take it for granted that you have provisions enough for supper," said Mr. Carter.

"Yes, and more than enough," said Benjamin. "Whatever we have got you are welcome to."

Benjamin drew his toboggan up in front of the lean-to and proceeded to unpack it, bringing to light a good many articles which were not often seen in a backwoods camp, such as condensed milk, preserved fruit, potatoes, pickles, bacon and eggs. Old man Carter's eyes glistened as he saw Benjamin remove the various articles from the toboggan under the lean-to, and he straightway resolved that he would keep the boys with him as long as possible. The longer he could eat their provisions the better it would be for his own.

Many hands make light work, so it did not take the three long to cook supper. When Mr. Carter filled his pipe and settled back on his couch he told himself that he had not eaten so good a meal since he had been at the reservoir. Then nothing would do but a story, and the man kept the boys interested in his tales of the woods until it was time they were getting supper.

"This is what I call making a living easy,"

said Percival, getting up and taking his axe to cut some wood to replenish the fire. "We have been with you several hours and we haven't seen you catch any furs yet. Why don't you go out and attend to your traps?"

"I haven't got any," replied old man Carter. "I left home without any, and have been obliged to build deadfalls. I've got only a few out and will attend to them in the morning."

When supper was prepared old man Carter's laziness began to exhibit itself. He lay upon his bed and allowed the boys to get the meal themselves, and when they pronounced it ready he got up, and when he laid down again he had disposed of more than half the food there was on the table. We said "table," but we were wrong there. The dishes as fast as they were cooked were laid out on the ground that had been swept of snow, but that did not hinder the boys' appetite. Percival looked on with surprise when he saw the viands disappear, and told himself that he and his brother would have to go home before long, for they would not have any grub left.

After supper came more stories, which was kept up until old man Carter began to get sleepy, and then he announced that he was going to bed. This he did by arranging his blankets in the most comfortable part of the lean-to and stretching himself out upon them. This did not exactly suit Percival, who inquired—

"Where are we going to sleep?"

"Right here beside me," replied old man Carter.

"Why, there isn't room enough."

"Oh, yes. Where there is room enough for one there is room enough for three. Good-night."

Mr. Carter speedily went off into the land of dreams, and for a long time Percival and his brother sat by the fire wondering if all trappers were as stingy as this man was. They agreed that in the morning they would build a lean-to of their own, and that then they would have a place to sleep. They would build it out at right angles with old man Carter's, so that they could have the advantage of the fire and be close at hand to listen to

his stories. Finally they began to grow sleepy, and without more ado they brought out their blankets and thrust them down beside old man Carter. The latter growled somewhat in his sleep, but the boys at length succeeded in stowing themselves away, and they slumbered soundly, too, in spite of the crowded condition of the lean-to. But they were glad when daylight came and they were at liberty to crawl out and stretch themselves.

"Are you going out to attend to your deadfalls to-day?" asked Percival.

"I expect to," was the answer.

"Well, Ben and I will stay here and build ourselves a lean-to, so that we can sleep without crowding you," said Percival.

"Oh, you don't crowd me any," replied old man Carter.

He laid himself down on his bed after washing his hands and face in the snow, and watched the boys getting breakfast. Percival did not tell him that he and Ben were the ones who were crowded, but that was what he had in his mind all the same. When he had

finished his breakfast he shouldered his rifle and went out to his trapping-grounds, with the remark that he would be back sometime in the course of the day, and would be powerful hungry when he returned, and having thus given the boys a hint of what he expected of them he bid them good-by.

"I will tell you what's a fact," said Percival, when old man Carter had disappeared, "we will have to go home by day after tomorrow. I never saw a man eat so before. If he eats so heartily all the while, it is no wonder where his money went."

Percival and Ben were interested in their work of putting up a lean-to, and between cutting the brush and trimming it so that they each could have a bed, the day was far spent before they knew it. When they got the lean-to done and their blankets carried under it and made up, it was a decidedly better-looking camp than old man Carter's. Then they thought of dinner. It is true that they did not serve up as great an amount of provisions as they did when Carter was present, but what little they had was well cooked, and

they had the satisfaction of eating it without seeing somebody reach for double his share.

After dinner they replenished the fire and lay around on their beds, and talked of old man Carter until they grew weary of it, and Percival was fast losing himself in slumber, when something that sounded like the deep-toned bay of a hound came faintly to his ears. He started up and listened, and presently the sound was repeated.

"By George! Bob Carter is up here hunting," said he.

"Can you tell his dog's voice from here?" asked Ben.

"Of course I can. Don't I wish he would come within sight of us now? I would up-end him so quick that he wouldn't know what hurt him."

"Yes," replied Ben. "Then you would have to hide his body. If old man Carter should see you draw a bead on that dog he would never forgive you."

"I don't believe old man Carter cares a cent for him. He often wanted to keep the dog up at the reservoir, but Hector wouldn't

stay with him, and the last time I saw him he was heaving chunks at him, and the dog was drawing a bee-line for home. I wouldn't have such a dog as that. I hope he will come back with Carter. I would wear one of these switches out on him."

It seemed that Hector had some enemies, too. The principal thing that Percival had against him was the estimation in which he was held by Bob Carter. Another thing, Hector thought too much of Paul and Hugh, and that was enough to raise Percival's anger. He thought it would be a mighty fine thing if he could shoot that dog, and so rob them of some pleasure, and he had more than once threatened to do it; but there was old man Carter. He might not like it.

"Do you suppose that Paul and Hugh are up here with him?" asked Ben. "I should think that one could not go hunting without the other."

"Yes, they are up here. I know just as well what has happened in their camp as though I was there."

The boys did not hear Hector's voice again,

and they finally settled down and went to sleep again. It must have been near five o'clock when they awoke, and the first one they saw was old man Carter in his fox-skin coat. The man had had considerable luck, for he had three mink skins in his hand.

"Halloo, boys. You have a place fixed for yourselves, haven't you?" was his greeting. "I wish you had come with me, for I had the biggest time getting one of these minks out of a log in which he had taken refuge. I have brought Bob's dog with me, too."

"Hector?" asked Percival, crawling out from under his lean-to.

"I reckon that's what you call him," said the man. "He has come with me to see me back to camp. I wish I could keep the brute with me to-morrow, for then I could find a deer or two; but the scamp will leave me pretty soon."

"Why don't you give him something to leave for?" said Percival, in disgust. "I wouldn't have such a dog as that. I would whale him every time he came around me."

"You can whale him if you want to," said

old man Carter. "You don't like him any too well."

"Do you say I can lick him if I want to?" asked Percival, in surprise.

"Yes, and lay it on good, too. The old villain has run away from me every time I wanted him to go hunting, and I want him to have enough of it."

This was as fine an invitation as Percival wanted and he was prompt to act upon it. He failed to inquire why Mr. Carter wanted him to whip the dog, for it would have brought out the information that he was afraid of him. Hector was comfortably stretched out in front of the fire waiting patiently for the time when old man Carter was to be led to the camp, and by coming up behind him Percival could administer such a beating that the dog would not get over it for a long while. He looked all around the camp and finally saw the top of a beech which he and his brother had cut for rafters of their lean-to. It was so heavy that it took both hands to manage it, and there were several branches near the top, so that

wherever they touched they would be sure to sting.

"I guess this will do," said Percival, as he picked up the switch. "Now, my fine fellow, I'll teach you to come here where you are not wanted."

He raised the beech with both hands and brought it down upon Hector's back with all his might. In an instant the hound was on his feet. He did not run, but he stood there, holding one leg in the air, and the echoes with which he awoke the woods with his yelping could have been heard a mile away.

"I'll teach you to yelp," continued Percival. "Take that and that back to your master's camp and tell him to keep you at home hereafter."

Again and again the beech descended, until Hector began to see who it was that was punishing him. He turned upon Percival, and in a moment more his forefeet were planted upon his breast and his tormentor went down under his weight. Not satisfied with that, the hound fastened his fangs in his arm and proceeded to shake him up as he

would a rat. The screams which Percival uttered were almost as loud and unearthly as those which Hector had uttered a moment before. Ben stood thunderstruck, while old man Carter rushed forward intending to rescue the boy; but Hector saw what was coming and he left Percival and started off through the woods.

"Well he rather turned the tables on you, didn't he?" said Mr. Carter, as he took Percival by the arm and helped him to his feet. "I never knew that dog to act that way before. I thought he would take his whipping and say nothing about it."

"Where is he?" said Percival, looking all around. "I'll bet he wouldn't get away from my shotgun if I could see him once more."

"Oh, he has gone back to camp to tell his master how you tried to lick him," said old man Carter. "I will bet that you would have your hands full if Bob should find it out."

"Yes, and I tell you that he will have trouble to protect that dog," said Percival, rolling up his sleeve to see what sort of a mark the hound had left behind him. "That

dog has got to be shot. I never will stand such treatment as this. Just look at that," he added, baring his arm and showing the prints of the hound's teeth. "I will get the authorities to work on that dog, and if they don't kill him I will kill him myself."

"Say, Perce, we ought to go home," said Ben, now speaking for the first time.

"Yes, sir, and that's where I am going the first thing in the morning. That dog may be mad."

"I should not wonder if he was mad," said old man Carter with a grin. "Wouldn't you be mad if somebody should pound you that way?"

"But you told me to do it," said Percival indignantly.

"But I supposed he would take his licking and light out," said Mr. Carter. "I never knew a hound dog to turn on a man before. Well, that is all over and nobody is badly hurt."

"'Ain't, hey? I would like to know what you would do if you had this mark on your arm?"

"Why, I would do just the same that you have resolved to do. I'd shoot the dog at first sight. But in the meantime who is going to get supper? I am powerful hungry."

"You can get supper yourself. Can you find anything to tie this up with, Ben? I'll get the blood all over my clothes."

"Oh, it doesn't bleed any," said old man Carter, who was surprised to see how Percival took it so much to heart. "Let it alone and it will come out all right."

Percival was not nearly so badly injured as he thought he was going to be. He thought his arm was torn entirely off; but an examination showed him that there were only four prints of the hound's teeth in sight, and they were merely flesh-wounds at that. Ben looked all around for something to tie it up with, but he was finally obliged to give it up in despair. Percival groaned and washed the blood off with snow, and while the supper was preparing he found that it had ceased bleeding already.

"I don't care," said he, when Mr. Carter called his attention to the fact that he was not

so badly hurt after all. "That hound would have killed me if you had not been here, for Ben couldn't do anything.

"You see I was so surprised at the hound's turning on you," said Ben by way of apology. "Before I could get my wits at work the dog had left you and gone into the bushes. If he had waited just a minute longer I would have shot him."

Old man Carter grinned but didn't say anything.

CHAPTER X.

BOB RECEIVES A LETTER.

"WELL, I suppose you boys are going home to-day. What will I do for grub while you are gone?"

"We will leave all our provisions that we don't use here with you. Yes, sir, I am going home to-day. I will send notice to Bob to kill that hound, and if he don't do it the next thing will be something else. You speak of being out of grub while we are gone. We are not coming back again, and so you'll soon starve to death."

"I will see about that. I am going to hunt up Bob's camp to-day, and I will soon find out where he left that money he collected from old man Smith. Of course I've got a right to have it."

It was just daylight and Percival and Ben were up getting breakfast. Old man Carter

lent a hand, for he thought it would not look very well for him to let the boys get breakfast and start off alone. Besides, he wanted the provisions that they did not use to be left with him. He inquired particularly after Percival's hurts, and although the boy was very tender of his arm Mr. Carter could see that he did not mind the wound at all. After breakfast they packed the toboggan in readiness to start for home, bade old man Carter good-by with the repeated assurance that Hector should not live long to trouble him, and went off into the woods. After they went away Mr. Carter filled his pipe and lay down on his bed to think about it.

"Well, it is all right so far," said he to himself. "Didn't that hound shake him up though? I just knew the dog would turn on him, and I kept myself out of the muss. Now the next thing is to hunt up Bob. He must be up here in company with Paul and Hugh, and how am I going to work so that I can get him alone to talk to him? Those boys will advise him not to give up a cent of his money, and I want to get the start of them."

It required the smoking of three or four pipefuls of tobacco before old man Carter arrived at a decision on this point, and finally he made up his mind that he had to face Bob in some way or another, so he put away his smoking utensils, shouldered his rifle, and set out through the woods in the same direction Hector had gone the night before. He kept on by his trapping-ground, stopping to look at three of his deadfalls without finding anything in them, and presently reached the ground over which the boys he wanted to see had traveled the day before with their toboggan. By turning off to the right and following that track he knew he would reach the camp. In case he found the boys there he intended to enter the camp and be very glad to see them; but while he was thinking about it he glanced ahead and saw Bob coming toward him with his gun on his shoulder and something, he could not tell what, in his hand. Hector was along, running in advance of his master, and he was quick to discover the advancing figure through the trees. He stopped, took a second look at the man and

then came to meet him, wagging his tail in the most friendly manner. Fortunately he did not know that he had been beaten through Mr. Carter's consent. If he had known it, it is not at all probable that he would have been so glad to see him.

"Good morning, Bob," said his father. "Where have you started for now?"

Bob was not at all pleased to see his sire. He had the white skin of that beaver he had shot the day before, and he was in hopes that he was going to take it home without his father's knowledge; but some misfortune had sent him there just in time to catch him with it.

"I am going home," answered Bob. It was too late to throw the skin into the bushes out of sight, for his father was close on to him before he was aware of it.

"What are you going home for now?" asked old man Carter. "You have got Paul and Hugh up here with you, haven't you?"

"Yes, they are safe in camp. They are going to stay there until I get back."

"What's that you've got in your hand?"

inquired Mr. Carter, now discovering the beaver skin. "It looks like a muskrat."

"Well, it isn't," said Bob, who thought he might as well settle the matter one time as another. "It is the skin of a white beaver."

"Oh, get out," said his father.

"That is what the boys call it, anyway. It is worth a hundred dollars."

"Let me see it," said the man, who was not yet satisfied that the boy had told him the truth.

Bob surrendered the skin with a great deal of reluctance. He did not know but that his father might lay claim to it, and then his day's hunt would amount to nothing; but he thought he would open his father's eyes in regard to stealing it.

"That skin is worth a hundred dollars," he repeated. "I shall take it home and hang it up in the woodshed, and anyone who breaks that lock and comes in there and takes it will be guilty of larcency, and I can put him in jail for it."

"Not if your own father takes it," said Mr. Carter.

"Yes, if you take it," said Bob emphatically. "The skin is mine, I shall give it to nobody, and anyone who steals it would render himself liable to punishment. I talked it all over with Paul and Hugh last night."

"Well, those boys have put a wrong notion in your head. I can take anything you make and laugh at the law. Hold on, now," he added, seeing that Bob's face was growing white, "I am not going to steal this thing. I am just telling you what I could do if I felt like it. I have a right to everything you make, but you have always had the money you made at the mill and I don't see why I should take it from you. Take your old skin and carry it home with you."

Bob's face grew bright again. His father was the only man he was afraid of who would steal it, and yet he had had it in his hands and returned it to him. He thought he was going to have good luck with his fur after all.

"And did you kill him with that single-barrel gun of yours?" asked old man Carter. "That was a bully shot for you; and yet here

I am, driven from home, and might hunt the woods through and I never would get a shot like that. Did old man Smith pay you that money?"

"He did," answered Bob. "I went down to his house and Paul got it for me."

Bob did not care to tell his father that Mr. Smith had paid him double what he owed him, and that some of it had been left in his mother's hands.

"Have you got any of it with you?"

"Not a cent. You know you took all the provisions out of the house——"

"Well, I had to have something to eat while I was catching some furs, didn't I?" asked his father impatiently.

"I suppose you did; but it was mighty hard on mother."

"I knew you could get something for her to eat well enough. That storekeeper at the village would trust you. And what did you do with the money you got of Mr. Smith?"

"I paid up what I owed him, and then left ten dollars with him to pay up for extra provisions."

"And did you give it all to him?" asked old man Carter in surprise.

Bob nodded his head.

"Well, of all the born dunces I ever saw you are the beat," said his father, with disgust. "And here you will leave me to starve in these woods—I've the best notion in the world to take that beaver skin from you."

"You hadn't better do that," said Bob, who was determined to protect his own property. "It is highway robbery."

Father and son stood for several moments looking at each other. The one had all he could do to keep from jumping on Bob and taking the beaver skin whether he was willing or not, but there was Hector who stood in his way. The dog would spring upon him in a minute if he laid violent hands upon Bob, and old man Carter knew from the way he had served Percival the night before that one man had no business with him. He was afraid to shoot Hector, for everybody in the village was a friend to him, and if the truth must be told, he had men enough down on him all ready.

"Well, you go your way and I will go mine," said Mr. Carter, with a kind of desponding air in his tone. "But mind you, I will get the advantage of you at last."

"Are you going to steal this skin?" asked Bob.

"No, I shan't bother with it. I am not going to get myself in jail to please you. I wish I could give that dog as good a licking as he got last night."

"Oh, yes; that is something I wanted to speak to you about," said Bob, anxious to get his father off on another topic of conversation. "I saw he was hurt when he came to our camp last night, and I would give something to know who licked him. Who was it?"

"Well, Percival and his brother stayed in my camp last night," said his father.

"But Percival can't get close enough to him to beat him."

"Hector was lying down waiting for me to go to your camp with him, when Percival slipped up behind him and hit him three good whacks with a beech."

"It is a wonder that the dog didn't resist,"

said Bob, indignantly. "I will remember that against Percival."

"Oh, the dog turned on him. He sprang up and threw him down and chewed his arm up awfully."

"It served him just right."

"But he ain't a-going to let the thing rest here," continued his father. "He is going to send you notice that you had better kill the hound. If you don't do it, he will kill him."

"Well, I shan't do it. The dog is around home all the time, and I don't think Percival will come there to shoot him. And you stayed by there and saw it all! I should think you would have defended him."

"It was all done so quick that I didn't have time to say a word," said Mr. Carter, who stood so much in fear of Bob's tongue that he did not care to tell him the facts of the case. "The first thing I knew Percival was flat on his back and the hound shaking him up. They have gone home this morning."

"I will go on and see if I can catch him,"

said Bob, who was anxious to bring the interview to an end. "I want to see Percival about that."

"I really wish you had some of that money," said his father.

"But I haven't, you see. All you will find is to my credit on the storekeeper's books."

"You don't suppose I could go there and get some grub on the strength of it?"

"No," said Bob, in surprise, "I don't suppose you can. The money was put there to get some provisions for mother. You will have to go to work. That is the only way I know of to make money. You have lost your position as watcher of those dams, and what you are going to do now I don't know."

Bob went on his way, but as long as he remained in sight of his father he turned around occasionally to watch him. The man evidently did not know what to do, for he stood there leaning on his gun and gazing thoughtfully at the ground. A few more turns among the trees took him out of sight, and then Bob hurried ahead faster than ever.

"Good dog," said he, stopping to pat Hec-

tor on the head. "You wasn't going to take a licking when you didn't do anything to deserve it, were you?"

The hound lifted up his voice and gave tongue loudly, and although he did not know what Bob was talking about he wanted to show him that he fully sympathized with him.

"Now that I come to think it over," continued Bob, addressing his language to the hound, as if the latter could understand every word he said to him, "I think I had better let Percival go. You did not take the whipping without giving the fellow as good as he sent, and I guess he has been punished enough."

The dog wagged his tail as if he thought so too, and ran on ahead of his master; but there was one thing that Bob could not get out of his mind. How did Percival go to work to punish that dog and his sire was there in the camp, and did not know a thing about it? He came to the conclusion that his father was at the bottom of the matter; but whether he was or not, Bob determined that he would keep an eye on his favorite, and never allow him out of his sight again.

Bob and the Store-keeper.

UNIV. OF MICH.

It was a long and dreary walk to Newport, but Bob did not mind it much, for his attention was fully occupied by the thoughts of what he was going to get for his mother when the bills that his white beaver skin called for should be counted out to him. His mind was wrapped up in such thoughts as these when he came within sight of the grocery store. He thought he would go in and show his beaver skin, so that he would have more than one man to swear to it in case he lost it. His father was not a man who would do to trust too far. He did not profess to take much interest in the skin, but he knew it was worth a hundred dollars, and he might want to take that money.

"Halloo, Bob," exclaimed the grocery-keeper, who was sitting alongside the stove, with his coat off. "You got something, didn't you? What do you call it before his hide was taken off?"

"I've got a white beaver skin," said Bob, passing over his catch for the grocery-keeper to examine. "I killed him with my single-barrel at fifty yards."

There were plenty of loungers in the store, and there was not one among them who didn't get up from his chair and come forward to look into the matter. The skin was turned partly inside out, and when they had passed their hands over the fur and saw that it was white clear through, they began to open their eyes.

"You have made yourself rich," said the storekeeper. "I will give you fifty dollars for it."

"The fur isn't for sale at that price," returned Bob. I want a hundred dollars for it."

"Bob," said an old gray-headed man, who had made his living by trapping for twenty years and better, "you have got something that I have tried my level best to get for more than four years. I have seen that beaver once every fall, and done my prettiest to shoot him, but I never could get him within the range of my gun. Give me your hand on that. You're a better hunter than I am."

"Say, Bob, you want to keep this from the old man," said the storekeeper. "He won't let you have any hundred dollars if he can get the fur."

"Father has had it in his hands already," answered Bob. "He says he don't want to steal it."

The storekeeper smiled, and handed the fur back to Bob, and that smile made Bob feel somewhat discouraged. He began to believe that his father had designs on that fur after all, and he ran hastily over all the hiding-places in his house that he could think of where he could put his skin out of his sire's reach. He thought of the woodshed, but that would not do. There was a window close alongside the door, and it would be an easy matter for his father to break a pane of glass, thrust his arm through and remove the bolt, and he could get away with the catch, and nobody would be aware of it. He finally decided upon the garret. He could hang it up there and nobody could take it without showing himself to his mother. The storekeeper now arose from his chair and went around behind the counter.

"Come here, Bob. I want to see you a minute."

Bob accordingly went around where the

storekeeper was, and the latter, handing him a letter, said—

"What has your dog been doing up there? Percival Morton came down this morning, and it was all he could do to use his arm."

"Percival tried to whip Hector last night, and the dog turned on him," replied Bob. "I hope he hurt him in good fashion."

"Well, I guess he did. He tried to get me as one of the selectmen to shoot the hound; but I told him that I would rather wait and see you first."

"The hound wasn't doing anything to him," continued Bob. "Father was there and saw it all. Percival came up behind him and hit him with a beech, and the dog took him down."

"I knew there was something in the wind when he said it. The idea of that dog hurting anybody is absurd. Here's a letter that he wrote to you."

"All right. I will read it as I go along; but if he is trying to get me to kill that hound he had better give it up. If father comes here and asks you for something to eat you won't let him have any?"

"No, sir. He can't even get a chew of tobacco."

Bob thanked him, and taking up his gun and skin went out. Somehow he always seemed to feel worse when he went to that store, for there was always some one there to knock his arrangements into a cocked hat. The storekeeper seemed to think that his father might have a purpose concerning the skin he held in his hand, and that was something he did not care to think about. He had told his father that he would be guilty of larceny if he took the skin, but what did his father care for that? Perhaps he knew something about law that Bob did not know. His father had a right to the fur, of course, and it would be an uphill job to prove theft against him.

"I'll put the skin where he can't find it, and I'll send it off as soon as Paul finds out that hatter's address," said Bob, pulling Percival's letter from his pocket. "Now we'll see what this fine gentleman has got to say to me. If he wants me to kill that hound he has come to the wrong person. And the store-

keeper wouldn't kill him, either. That proves that Hector has some friends."

Bob tore open the letter as he walked along, and his eye rested on the following:

"I want you to understand that your worthless dog made an assault upon me last night, and that I won't stand it. I was lying in the camp and wasn't doing a thing to him, when the hound jumped upon me, held me down with his forefeet, and bit me fearfully in the arm. Now that dog has got to be killed for that. I have told the storekeeper to shoot him, and if he won't do it, I'll shoot him myself. I will give you one week to get rid of him."

Bob's first thought was to tear the letter into fragments and scatter the pieces along the road, and his next was to take it home and show it to his mother. The impudent fellow had called Hector a "worthless dog." If he had known how many deer the hound had followed to enable Bob to shoot and carry home to eke out his mother's scanty livelihood, he would not have called him worthless.

"Come here, old fellow," said Bob, stopping again to caress the dog. "He has given

me a week to get rid of you, and if you are around here at the end of that time he is going to shoot you himself. Well, let him try it. I believe he will find that you are worth money in a court of law."

Bob hurried on faster than ever, and soon found himself opposite the house in which Hugh Pratt lived. He went in there just to tell Hugh's mother that he was all right, but when she opened the door in response to his knock she discovered the fur which Bob held in his hand.

"Why, Bob, what have you got there?" she inquired.

The young hunter was obliged to tell the story of the shooting of the white beaver over again, and Mrs. Pratt listened in amazement.

"Bob, you have made yourself rich by that one shot," said she. "There are plenty of hunters in the woods who have tried in vain to do just what you have done."

When Bob listened to this compliment what was the reason he did not take Mrs. Pratt into his confidence, and ask her permission to hang the fur up in her house until

such time as Paul could write on to the hatter and get his correct address? It would have been safe there; but somehow he never thought of it. He wanted to take it home and show it to his mother, so he bid Mrs. Pratt good-by and started on again.

"If people keep on praising me in this way I shall think that I have done something worth boasting of," said Bob, as he broke into his old-fashioned dog-trot. "The only thing is, am I going to be able to keep the skin? I'll hang it in the garret, and it will be safe there."

When Bob reached home he found his mother seated in a big rocking-chair in front of a cheerful fire. She was surprised when Bob opened the door and came in, for she had supposed him to be far away in the woods. The boy kissed her and then threw his white beaver skin into her lap, while Hector went around and took possession of his rug behind the stove. Of course he knew that she would have a good many questions to ask, and he drew his chair up beside her and began his story all over again. The only question in

his mind was, where could he put the fur so that it would be safe? He told about meeting his father in the woods, and added that he had been advised to take the skin home; but, although his father did not seem at all interested in his catch, the way the grocery-keeper smiled at him made him anxious. He would put it in the garret, and then nobody could get it without his mother being aware of it.

"It is a mean piece of business to be obliged to hide one's catch from his own father," said Bob, arising from his chair. "I should think he ought to be with me and help me all he can."

Mrs. Carter made no reply, for she did not want to say anything that would add to the boy's discomfort. She saw him take his fur and go up to the garret with it, and when he came down he said he had placed it behind the chimney.

When Bob was at home he passed but very few idle minutes. There was mueh to be done, such as getting in wood, sweeping up the floor and cooking supper, and while he

was at work in the kitchen Mrs. Carter came out and made some inquiries regarding her husband. Bob told her that, as far as he knew, he was all right, and then he went on and told her about the scuffle that Percival Morton had with the hound, and showed her the letter received from him. Bob didn't know whether to tell his mother or not, but finally he concluded that she ought to know everything that had happened to him. His mother did not care anything about the threats that Percival had made in regard to the hound, but it troubled her to know that those Morton boys had been so anxious to see Mr. Carter. What did that mean?

It was dark before Bob got supper ready, but after the dishes had been washed and put away he was at liberty to sit down and talk to his mother. It was pretty near ten o'clock when they had touched on everything they wanted to say, and then Bob kissed his mother good-night and went to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

BOB HEARS BAD NEWS.

"I FOOLED him," said old man Carter, as he stood leaning on his rifle and watching Bob as he went on his way through the woods. "I made him believe that I didn't care a cent for that white beaver skin of his, and now he will go home and hang it up in the woodshed, and I'll go there and steal it. It beats the world what luck that boy does have. Here I am an old hunter, and that fellow can go into the woods and beat me without half trying. I'll have that skin or I will bust up the whole business."

When Bob and his dog had passed out of sight Mr. Carter shouldered his rifle and bent his steps towards his trapping-grounds. It was very little attention that he gave to his occupation, for his mind was fully occupied with the fine things he was going to buy with

the bills that the white beaver fur brought him. He didn't know whether he would stay in that country or not. With a hundred dollars he could go to Chazy Lake or some other place that was far off in the woods, and live as easily as he pleased.

"But first I must find out what that hatter's address is, so that I can send him the skin and get my money for it," said old man Carter. "But in order to do that I must first see Percival and get him to write the letter. I will tell him that I will shoot Hector for it; for, it don't make any difference what Percival says, Bob ain't a-going to kill that dog. But here's another thing. How am I going down to that village where Percival lives without getting myself in trouble? I had better think about that."

All that day old man Carter wandered lazily about his trapping-grounds, but, if the truth must be told, he spent more time sitting on the bank than he did in examining his deadfalls. When the declining sun warned him that it was near night, he had just one muskrat to show for his labor. He did not

want to go near his house that night, for he knew that Bob would be there. Bob would stay at home one night and come out to his camp the next day, and that was the time he intended to steal the skin. There would be nobody at home to bother him except his wife, and old man Carter knew that she couldn't do anything.

"I'll have that skin if I have to bust up the whole business," he repeated, as he struck into the woods toward his camp. "I'll keep out of sight of the folks at the grocery store and not go near the house until dark. Bob will not be at home for a few days, and by the time he finds out that the skin is gone I'll have my money for it."

Mr. Carter reached his camp after a while, and went lazily about getting supper. All he had was bacon and hardtack, although he might have served up some other delicacies if he had felt in the humor. After that he smoked a pipe, and when it was fairly dark he went to sleep. It was broad daylight when he awoke. His breakfast was the same as his supper, and filling a pipe—he never could

smoke and walk around—he sat on his bed of boughs and thought of what he was going to do when he had his son's catch in his hand. At last he got ready for action, which he did by shouldering his rifle and starting off through the woods towards his house. He did not follow the same path that Bob had made the day before for he would be certain to meet him on his way to the village, but he kept in the thick woods all the way, and shortly before dark he drew up within plain sight of his house. He was careful to remain under cover of the woods until it was dark enough to conceal his movements, for he knew better than to allow anyone of his neighbors to see him; but when he thought he could do so, he arose from the fallen log on which he was sitting and drew a straight course for home. His wife was sitting there, as he had expected to find her, in a big rocking-chair, with her feet resting upon the stool that Bob had made for her. She was surprised when he opened the door, but the smile that overspread her face showed that she was glad to see him.

"Why, Arthur," she exclaimed, reaching out her hand, "have you come back to stay?"

Old man Carter did not pay the least attention to her hand, but leaned his rifle up in one corner of the room so that he could have it handy, drew a chair close to the stove and spread his hands over it to warm himself.

"I was afraid you would freeze to death," continued his wife. "I hope your big fox-skin coat kept you warm."

"Did, hey?" said the man, running his eyes over the room to see that nothing had been disturbed during his absence. "I had a camp up there and came home to get something to eat."

"I hope you have been successful with your trapping."

"Well, I ain't. Three minks and one muskrat skin is all I have to show for my work. You take it mighty easy here—nothing to do but sit around by the fire all day. You don't even keep the house swept up."

"Why, the house has been swept. Bob was here——"

"Oh, yes; it is Bob all the time. Lots of

times I noticed that when Bob and I were home, Bob always had to do something. You never called on me at all."

"Bob is always ready and I did not want to trouble you. I do all I can. I dare not go out of the house for wood because I shall take cold and make myself sicker than I am now."

"Take cold," said old man Carter, as if the thought was enough to enrage him. "Of course you will take cold if you stay in the house with a warm fire to back you up. Why don't you go out and get tough? Have you got anything to eat? I had nothing but bacon and hardtack this morning, and a person can't live and do business on that alone."

"You will find something in the pantry. Bob cooked a lot of food before he went away."

"You don't think there is any danger of those men coming here with switches, do you?"

"No, they did not say they would come again."

"They had better not; and to make sure

of their staying out when they do come I'll just lock the door."

"I really wish you had gone up to the South pond reservoir and let off that water," said Mrs. Carter, burying her face in her hands. "Then you would not have been obliged to guard against your neighbors."

"Don't I tell you it was raining and had been for three days, and I didn't want to go out in it and get wet?" said Mr. Carter angrily, as he got up and locked the door. "I wasn't going out to get drenched through for old man Smith or anybody like him. I just wish Bob had been in my place. I would liked to see if he would have gone out in it."

Mrs. Carter made no reply. She knew what Bob would have done if he had been there. It had been raining but two days, and Bob would have gone out in it if he had been able to move. She saw her husband go into the kitchen and close the door behind him. He was gone a long time, and when he came back he was wiping his lips as if he had enjoyed a good meal. There was one thing that

troubled Mrs. Carter: if her husband swept the pantry as clean as he did before, where was she going to get any provisions to last her until Bob came home?

"Bob tells me that he spent some of the money old man Smith gave him to buy you some grub, and that he gave the rest into the hands of that useless storekeeper, to go to your credit," said Mr. Carter, pulling out his pipe and preparing for his after-supper smoke. "Now what made him do that?"

"Because he wanted me to get some more provisions," replied Mrs. Carter, her face still buried in her hands.

"Well, don't he know that I want some provisions too? It's mighty nice for him to lie around the fire all day and do nothing. How would he feel if he was in my fix?"

"You brought it all on yourself," said Mrs. Carter. She was very much afraid that her husband would ask her how much Bob got for his fifteen days' work in the mill, and she did not know how she would answer him. But, fortunately, old man Carter did not think of that. She had some of the money left in

her hands, and she did not see how in the world she was going to save it. Old man Carter always grew angry whenever anyone accused him of being the author of his own misfortunes, and he did not try to repress the sneer that arose to his lips.

"The less you say about that the better," said he. "I knew what was wanted there at the mill better than any of them. Now, when you get ready you can lie down and go to sleep. I will sit here by the fire until I get warm, and then I will lie down on the lounge."

"You are sure you will be here in the morning?"

"I will be here in the morning until about daylight, and then I shall go off to the woods again. I tell you it will come pretty hard on me to leave this fire. I wish Bob was in my fix. Why, I would go out there every day to take him provisions."

Mrs. Carter knew very well how her husband would have acted if he and his son could have changed places, but she did not want to get into an argument with him, and so she arose from her chair and went into her bed-

room, closing the door behind her; for the smell of tobacco-smoke always made her deathly sick. She said good-night as she went into her room, to which old man Carter responded by a grunt that might have meant anything. Then he laid his finger alongside of his nose and winked at the stove, as much as to say that he knew something worth two of that.

"Bob didn't hide his fur in the woodshed, as I thought he was going to," he said, "for he knew it would be easy for me to get it out of there. He's hid it somewhere else; but I am bound to have it, if I have to bust up the whole thing. When the old woman gets to sleep I'll pull off my shoes and go all over the house but that I will find it. And if I once get my hands on it, I'd like to see him get it again."

With this thought to console him, old man Carter smoked two pipes, and then he slowly pulled off his shoes. With noiseless footsteps he approached the door of his wife's room and spent some minutes in listening, and finally becoming aware that she was fast

asleep, he moved away and began to search the house. If his wife was disturbed and wanted to know what he was about, he could easily say that he was hunting up some provisions. He first devoted his attention to the woodshed again, but he found nothing there. Next he took the pantry and the kitchen, but he had his trouble for his pains. He looked into every closet in the sitting-room, but he did not discover the fur of which he was in search.

"Now I will go upstairs and into the garret, and if I don't find it up there I shall know it is in the old woman's room," said he, disheartened at not finding the fur at the first time trying. "And you bet I will soon have it out of there. I ain't a-going back without it."

Very softly he opened the door that gave entrance to the stairs and ascended to the floor above; but he found nothing there. He was almost inclined to go down and tell his wife what he was looking for, and demand that she should tell him where it was; but he had one place to look before he decided on

that. He went up the stairs that led into the garret, looked all around, went behind the chimney, and there he found the white beaver skin. He seized it with a firm grip, as if he did not mean to let it go again.

"There," said he, and it was the first time he had smiled since the disaster at the mill. "I guess I'll have something to say about the nice things this fur will buy. That boy knew it belonged to me, and why didn't he give it over?"

Old man Carter retraced his steps to the woodshed, unfastened the door, and placed the skin just outside it, so that he could slip up and get it without disturbing his wife. Then he went back to his chair in the sitting-room and filled up for another smoke. The question was now, Where was he going to put it, and should he stay in that country instead of going off to Chazy Lake? How was he going to find Percival Morton, in the first place, and induce him to write a letter to that hatter?

"Well, this is only one day gone out of all that we have got to live, and mebbe I'll think

of something out there in the woods," said he. "The idea of that boy getting a shot that I ought to have made myself! If it wasn't for that hound I would go to work and lick him."

Bob did not know how good a friend Hector was to him. He lay in his camp beside Paul and Hugh, who were sleeping soundly, with his eyes fastened upon the hound, but he was thinking of that fur that was hidden in his garret. A hundred dollars was a big sum in his eyes, and he did not know how he should go to work to get rid of it.

Meanwhile old man Carter finished his pipe and then lay down on the lounge and went to sleep. He slumbered as soundly as he would if he had never been guilty of a mean act in the whole course of his existence. He did not care for Bob, or for the utter consternation that would come upon him when he learned that the skin of his white beaver was gone. He slept until something told him that he ought to get up. He arose from his lounge and put on his shoes, and at that moment the door of his wife's room opened and she came out.

"I tell you it was lucky that I did not put off getting that fur, as I meant to do," said old man Carter to himself, not forgetting to return his usual grunt to his wife's good-morning. "She would have caught me, sure. I don't care if she does find it out after I get away. I will get off into the woods and she and Bob can rave as much as they want to."

"What made you get up so early, Arthur?" said Mrs. Carter. "I can get you some breakfast——"

"You had better go back to bed and let me get my own breakfast," said old man Carter, who did not care to have his wife around the woodshed. She might open the door for some purpose or another, and just as surely as she did she would find the white beaver skin out there. "I can get myself a cup of coffee, and that is all I need."

Mr. Carter hurried on his shoes and went into the kitchen, closing the door behind him. That was as good a warning as Mrs. Carter wanted that he was able to take care of himself; so she dressed herself and took possession of her big rocking-chair. Mr. Carter was out

there for half an hour, and when he came back he did not have any provisions with him.

"I have concluded that I won't take anything," said Mr. Carter, who easily understood the look of surprise on his wife's face. "Bob won't be at home for a few days, and you will have grub enough to do you till he comes. Now I am off for the woods again."

"Don't you think that this thing will 'blow over,' as Bob expressed it, and that you can come home after a while?" asked his wife.

"It won't 'blow over' until the new dam is built," said Mr. Carter. "When that is done I can come home, and not before. Good-by."

He spoke these words plain enough, and Mrs Carter held out her hand to him, but the man paid no attention to it. He filled up his pipe, took his rifle and went out. Very cautiously, for the night was cold and the snow creaked considerably under his feet, he went around the house to the spot where he had left the beaver skin. It was there, and he took it up and hid it under his coat. It was getting pretty light now, there were one or

two people passing along the road, and he did not know but one of them might discover him with it. He made all haste to get into the woods, and then he drew the fur out and carried it in his hand.

"There, sir," said old man Carter, who felt relieved to know that he had performed the meanest act of his life. "Mister Bob, your shot didn't amount to anything, or rather I should say that it did amount to a great deal. Your father has got this skin in his hands, and we'll see what it is going to bring us. Now, shall I stay here until I sell it, or take it up to Chazy Lake and sell it there? That's a thing that requires a heap of study."

It did not take old man Carter nearly as long to go back to his camp as it did to come away from it, and by three o'clock in the afternoon he was within sight of it. Everything there was just as he had left it, but he could not help drawing a contrast between his circumstances and the easy manner in which his wife was living. She had a fire and plenty of provisions, and above all a boy to wait on her, while he had his own fire to

build and his supper to cook. He had not been used to this life for a number of years, and somehow he did not seem to take to it.

"But I have got the fur, all the same, and, Bob, you will never see hide nor hair of it any more," said Mr. Carter, leaning his rifle against a convenient log. "Now the next thing is to determine where I shall hide it, for I know that Bob will hunt the woods over as soon as he finds out that his fur is gone. I guess the place I thought of will do as well as any."

Old man Carter started toward a little grove of evergreens which stood a short distance from his lean-to. He had decided that he would hang the skin up in one of the branches of the trees, and then, if any animal came there to trouble the skin during the night, he would be certain to know it. He selected one of the tallest evergreens, climbed into it, cut off a limb, and hung the fur upon that, out of the way of anybody who might happen along there. This done, he retraced his steps to his lean-to to cook his lonely supper.

And where was Bob all this time? After

providing everything for his mother that he could think of, he had kissed her good-by and started with a light heart for his camp. His father, if he had any designs upon the fur, could not get it now without letting his mother know it, and then he would know right where to look for it; that is, he would accuse Mr. Carter of stealing it, and give him his choice between giving back the fur or going to jail.

"I gave him fair warning about that, and he ought to know that I was in earnest," said Bob, as he came within sight of his camp and saw Paul and Hugh engaged in getting supper. But what was that other thing he saw hung upon a tree close by? It was a deer, and the boys had caught him, too, without the aid of Hector. "Halloo!" he cried. "It doesn't make any difference to you whether you have a dog or not. Now where did you get him?"

"I tell you, Bob, we are glad to see you back," said Paul, stopping to pat the hound on the head. You must give Hugh credit for this. He took that old-fashioned way of sitting on a log and waiting for a deer to

come up to him—a style I never did like—and when this deer came up within forty feet of him, he just knocked him over. Did you ever see anybody have such luck?"

Bob took time to look the game over before he expressed an opinion. It was a prong-horn buck, and as fat as if he had just come out on purpose to be shot. There was a haunch of venison broiling on the coals, and a glance at it showed Bob that there was enough for himself and a good supper for Hector into the bargain.

"Everybody is having luck except me," continued Paul, using his long-handled fork to hoist up the haunch to see if it was done. "I have not shot off my loads since I left home."

"But you killed that turkey," said Hugh. "Of course I have got to make amends for losing him. How did you leave everything at home?"

"I guess I left them all right," said Bob, seating himself on his bed under the lean-to. "I left word with your mother that you were here in camp waiting for me, and then took my skin home and hung it up in the garret."

Paul and Hugh did not say anything in reply. They had talked the matter over since Bob started for home, and had come to the conclusion that the fur would have been safer if he had asked Mrs. Pratt's permission to hang it up in her house. They did not know that Mr. Carter knew all about the skin until Bob enlightened them on it. He told about meeting his father back there in the woods, informed them of the demand he had made upon him for money, reported that he had had the skin in his hands and had given it back to him; to all of which the boys listened in amazement. They did not think it best to warn Bob that his father had an eye on that fur, for they believed that he would find it out soon enough. Supper was soon ready, and all the boys sat down to it with ravenous appetites. The meal was not much like the one old man Carter was eating in his lean-to not more than three miles away. There all was life and jollity, and Hugh created great amusement by telling of the deer he had shot. When supper was over all hands took part in washing the dishes, and after that the boys

threw themselves on their couches and waited until it was time to go to bed.

After Bob's return things went on as they usually did, and the boys had so much game that they did not know what to do with it. Minks and muskrats especially seemed to come out of their holes on purpose to be caught. Bob proposed that they should take some of them home, but Paul and Hugh would not agree to it.

"We are out here for two weeks, and right here for two weeks we are going to stay," said Paul. "You don't get me home while our vacation lasts."

"But remember you must go home when the two weeks are up," said Bob, who did not like the idea of drawing money while he was engaged in hunting in the woods. "I have kept a regular note of the days we have passed here, and when the time is up I am going to start."

"Well, if you go we will have to go too," said Hugh. "But it will be mighty hard on us going to work on that old sawmill."

Sunday was a day of rest with the boys.

They did not shoot anything, although a deer once came by within a short distance of their camp. They were all out of meat by that time, and Paul and Hugh fairly ached to shoot him; but the deer took a leisurely survey of the camp and then went safely back into the woods. At length their two weeks had gone by and the boys reluctantly started for home. They had three deer which they had killed on purpose to take with them, and their journey was much shorter than they had supposed it would be because it was enlivened by songs and stories. They stopped to show the storekeeper their game, and then went on their way to Hugh Pratt's house. Two of the deer were left there, and the toboggan was unloaded so that Bob could draw his game home. Full of life and animation, he broke into a dog-trot, and in a few minutes walked across the plank that bridged the ditch. Leaving his toboggan at the foot of the steps, he burst open the door and found his mother sitting in her big rocking-chair.

"Come out, mother, and see what I have brought for you," said Bob, throwing his

arms about her. "It will take the place of bacon for a long time. Why, mother, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Bob," exclaimed Mrs. Carter, "your white beaver skin is gone!"

CHAPTER XII.

OLD MAN CARTER'S PROPOSITION.

MRS. CARTER breathed easier after her husband had gone off into the woods for two reasons. In the first place she was afraid that some of his neighbors had seen him when he came into the house and that they would certainly be back with their switches to take revenge on him for the cattle he had killed, and, in the next, she was fearful that the old man would have something to say about the white beaver fur that Bob had hidden somewhere under her roof. When she went into her room and closed the door she did not go to sleep. She did not know when her husband took off his shoes and walked noiselessly about the house, for he took good care not to make any sound. He went upstairs and got the white beaver skin and put it outside the woodshed door, and she was none the wiser for it.

Ten days passed, and then Mrs. Carter found that her provisions were getting low. She shut down on a portion of her food and went on "half rations," but when the provisions were nearly all gone she heard a knock at the door and opened it to find a man there, Jed Brooks by name, who had been a sawyer at the mill, and who had lost his position through old man Carter's carelessness. He had always been a faithful friend to Bob, and wanted to see him do well. He had been one of those who came there with a switch in his hand, but he did not take any part in it. If the men had found Mr. Carter there and intended to beat him, Jed was going to interfere.

"Halloo, Mrs. Carter," said Jed, making an awkward attempt to touch his hat. "You are most out of provisions, ain't you? Well, the storekeeper got to thinking of you this morning, and he told me I had better come down and bring you this grub." Here he took a basket off his shoulder and placed it on the floor in front of Mrs. Carter. "Did you hear anything from Bob lately?"

"Oh, Jed, you don't know how much obliged I am to you and the storekeeper," said Mrs. Carter. She told herself that if all the inhabitants of the neighborhood were as good friends to Bob as this man was, she would fare bountifully. "I was getting a little short of food, but I am comfortable now, thank you."

"I guess you had better let me lift that basket," said Jed, when Mrs. Carter bent over to raise the burden and carry it back where it belonged. "It is rather a heavy load for an invalid. Where do you want them?"

When Jed was unloading the things he cast his eyes all around the kitchen as if he were looking for something. When he got through he said—

"I guess I had better bring you in a few armfuls of wood and a bucket of fresh water. I don't see how you live here. You don't have any company at all, do you?"

"I don't have very much, that is a fact. Mrs. Pratt would come over once in a while, but she is absent from home. I don't like to trouble you with these things. Bob will be

at home in a day or two, and then I shall get along all right."

"Where's old man Carter?" asked Jed.

"He is in the woods."

"Yes; and if he knows when he is well off he will stay there, too. There's a heap of people down on him in this settlement."

"There is one thing more that I wish you would do for me," said Mrs. Carter, as Jed came in, after filling the wood-box as full as it would hold, bringing in a pail of fresh water, and pulled a chair up in front of the fire." "You know that Bob killed a white beaver since he has been in the woods, didn't you?"

"I heard something about it but I did not see it," said Jed. "I tell you that was a lucky shot. Old man Burroughs has been after that beaver for years, but he never could get a bead on him. That skin is worth a hundred dollars."

"Bob has been lucky if he can only keep the skin."

"Keep the skin? Who's going to steal it?"

"I don't know that anybody would be so

mean to him as that; but—you know where our garret is?"

"I believe I could find it," said Jed.

"Well, I wish you would go up there and look behind the chimney. Bob put it there when he was home a few days ago. I have been wanting to go up myself, but I am so weak that I am afraid to go upstairs."

Jed at once arose from his chair and started off to find the way to the garret, while Mrs. Carter settled back in her chair and awaited the result of his search with some uneasiness. She had no positive proof that her husband had stolen the fur, but she knew his disposition better than he did himself. She knew when Jed opened the door that led into the garret and heard him ascending the stairs. She heard him walking around up there—he was gone at least ten minutes—and when he came down again his face was as long as your arm.

"It is not there," said he. "I've looked behind the chimney and all over, and nothing in the shape of a white beaver skin did I see."

Mrs. Carter settled back in her chair again,

and her usually pale face grew whiter still. She did not care anything about the fine things that Bob was going to buy for her, but she felt sore over the disappointment that she knew Bob would experience when he found his fur gone. Jed looked at her, and then something that sounded like an oath came to his lips.

"Who has been in this house since Bob went away?" said he.

"Mr. Carter," said the woman.

"Then he is the one who stole the skin," said Jed, rubbing his hands nervously together. "Do you know whereabouts in the woods his camp is?"

"Oh, Jed, you must not try that. He has his rifle with him."

Jed knew very well what his wife meant by that hint. Old man Carter would shoot, and all who went on that expedition would not be likely to return.

"This is hard luck, I declare," said Jed, after thinking the matter over. "Is there anything else I can do for you? Then I will go down to the store, and see what the men there have to say about it. Good-by."

Jed put on his hat and went away, and Mrs. Carter drew up to the window and saw him depart. He went rapidly, as though he was going for the doctor. Old man Carter, by that one act, had destroyed all the warm feeling that his neighbor had for him.

"I hope they won't attempt to take the skin from him by force," said Mrs. Carter, as she returned to her chair. "Somebody will get hurt if they do, and that will make Mr. Carter's case worse than it is now."

During all that day she sat in her chair, with her face buried in her hands, never thinking of dinner or supper at all, and when it grew dark she got up to light the lamp. Hardly had she got the match touched to the wick when a heavy step sounded on the porch, the door opened, and Mr. Carter came in.

"Oh, Arthur!" was all his wife could say to him.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" asked the man. "Is this the way you greet me when I have been away from you so long?"

"What made you do it?"

"Do what?" said old man Carter, as he

placed a bag and his rifle carefully in one corner.

"You stole Bob's white beaver skin."

It was right on the point of Mr. Carter's tongue to deny this. He looked searchingly at his wife, and something he saw in her face told him that it would be useless.

"Have you been upstairs?" said he.

"No, I am too weak to go; but Jed Brooks was here——"

"Aw! Jed Brooks! What business has he got loafing about here?"

"He came up to bring me some provisions, of which I was nearly out," said his wife. "He went up there to see if Bob's white beaver fur was where he left it, but it was gone. You will give it back to him, will you not?"

"Mighty clear of me giving that fur back to Bob," said old man Carter, going toward the kitchen door. "Why didn't Bob say that he would give me half of it? Instead of that, he calculated to spend it all on you. I am getting tired of such work. There I am, out in the woods, freezing every night,

and you are here by the fire with not a thing to do."

"Where are you going now?"

"That's my business, but I don't mind telling you of it. Do you see that bag lying beside my rifle? There is half a dozen mink skins in there and a dozen muskrat skins. I have eaten up all my grub, and am now on my way to the village to get some more. You would let a fellow starve to death and wouldn't send him anything."

"But, Arthur, I could not do it. I was out of provisions myself."

Old man Carter did not say any more, but went into the kitchen, closing the door behind him. The provisions were all there just as Jed had taken them out of the basket, and all he had to do was to start a fire and make himself a cup of tea. He felt rather guilty about stealing the white beaver skin from Bob, but when he came to think it over he told himself that he had done perfectly right. He had not brought the beaver skin with him, for he had left it in a safe hiding-place until he knew whether or not Percival Morton was

acquainted with the address of the hatter. If he was, he would take him up there to get the skin, and perhaps give him a chance to shoot Hector in revenge for the assault he had made upon him.

"In that way I can kill two birds with one stone," said Mr. Carter, to himself. "There is nobody up here who will shoot Hector, he can just bet on that, and so he will have to put him out of the way himself."

Mr. Carter took his time about getting supper, and when at last he had satisfied his appetite he went into the sitting-room and filled his pipe for a smoke. His wife had nothing to say to him. She sat with her eyes fastened on the stove, but said not a word.

"I declare I don't know what's the matter with you," said the man, after he had got his pipe well lighted. "You have always had a good deal to say to me when I came home from watching the dams, but now you are as dumb as an oyster."

"I have only one thing to say to you, and you will not agree to that," said Mrs. Carter.

"I want you to return that skin to Bob. It rightfully belongs to him."

"And don't I tell you that I won't do it?" demanded old man Carter. "The fur does not rightfully belong to Bob; it belongs to me. Bob is not twenty-one years old yet, and because I have let him have all the money he earned at the mill to spend upon you, you think I ought to give him that beaver skin. Well, I won't do it, I tell you. Now, if you have got done your jawing you can go to bed. There ain't anything I can steal here in the house to-night."

Mrs. Carter gladly complied on account of the tobacco-smoke, and this time she did not bid her husband good-night. Old man Carter understood what she meant by that, and when she had closed the door he laid his finger alongside his nose and winked at the stove.

"The old woman is siding with Bob; I can see that very plainly," said he. "Let's see what she will make by it. I've got the skin, it is hidden up there in that bunch of evergreens, out of sight of everybody, and now

all I want to see is Percival Morton. When I get the money that fur is worth you'll see Bob coming to me to borrow a small sum. Will I give it to him? It depends altogether upon how he acts. If he is mad because I took the fur for my own, he won't get a cent."

Mr. Carter had not exactly formed it in his own mind what he would do in case Percival did not know the address of the hatter. He remembered that the gentleman had given his card to Paul or Hugh, he did not know which one, and perhaps Percival was ignorant of it; but then he consoled himself with the thought that if it was worth a hundred dollars to one hatter it might be worth the same to another, and he would certainly find somebody who was willing to give that price for it. He smoked up three pipefuls of tobacco while he was thinking about it, and finally pulled off his shoes and lay down upon the lounge.

It was five o'clock when he awoke, and this time he noticed that his wife did not come out and offer to cook breakfast for him. He had

it all to get for himself; but then provisions were handy, and he did not care anything for that. At the end of an hour he shouldered his bag and went out, leaving his rifle behind him. There was nobody in the village who had anything against him, and he did not think it necessary to go armed. Besides, there were constables to be found where he was going, and he could call upon them if he was in danger of violent handling. He kept to the woods until he reached a place where the banks of the river were high and there was no low land for the water to spread out, and then he took to the road. He walked rapidly, for he had a long distance to go. One would scarcely think that a man of Mr. Carter's laziness could get up so much speed. Very often he met people on the road who pulled up their teams and wanted to speak to him about the lynching party who had visited his house with switches (it was known all over the county by this time); but Mr. Carter gave short answers to all their inquiries, and walked ahead faster than ever. At length, to his great delight, the houses of the village

came into view. He knew where he could go and rest in safety until morning, and he lost no time in getting there. It was the shop of a man who dealt in skins, and in a short time he opened the door and went in.

"I can't afford to give you more than a dollar and a half for that skin," he heard the proprietor say as he approached the counter where he was standing. "You have carried it in your pocket and you have got it all wrinkled up. Halloo, Carter. You have met with some accident out your way, I understand. And you have gone to trapping again," he added, as Mr. Carter up-ended his bag and dumped his skins on the counter. "Now, there is a mink skin that is worth three dollars," he continued, picking up one of old man Carter's furs and handing it over to his other customer. "The next time you bring in any mink skins leave them out straight like this, and they will be worth money."

Mr. Carter stood around and saw the man accept a small price for his skins, and when he went out the proprietor turned to him. The mink skins were all worth three dollars

apiece, and the muskrats called for fifteen cents. Mr. Carter was well satisfied with the price, and the man paid him the money without any further trouble. The proprietor was well acquainted with all that had gone on at Mr. Carter's house, but he said nothing about it. Old man Carter had gone to trapping again, and he did not want to make him angry the first thing. If he did, he would go somewhere else to sell his furs.

"Say," said Mr. Carter, folding up the bills and thrusting them into his vest pocket, "what's a white beaver skin worth?"

"Good gracious! Have you got one?"

"Yes, sir. I have got as nice a skin as you ever saw. I had a time of it getting him, too."

"I will give you seventy-five dollars for it."

"No, sir. That skin is worth a hundred dollars, and nobody shan't have it for a cent less."

"Why, I want to make something, don't I?"

"Yes; but you want to make too much. Can I stay here with you and get supper and breakfast?"

"Yes. Pull off your coat and sit down and have a cigar."

Old man Carter felt as if he was almost a millionaire about that time. He pulled off his coat, accepted the cigar the proprietor offered him, seated himself by the stove and drew a contrast between himself now and the position he was in while watching the dams at the mill. He had earned nineteen dollars and eighty cents by his two weeks' work, but then he was his own master and could go and come when he felt like it. The only trouble was, Did Percival know the address of that hatter? If he didn't, or if he could not induce the proprietor to say he would give him a hundred dollars for that skin, why then, sooner than go without any money at all, he must accept what he had offered.

"Well, that is better than nothing," said he. "It will give me a good start to get some furs, and we'll see what Bob will say about it."

Somehow or other Bob always came up when he thought of disposing of that fur. He could not shake him off. He knew that Bob would be disappointed, but then there

were his rights as a father that ought to have been respected. When supper was ended the proprietor did not say anything more about the fur, and after waiting in vain for some time Mr. Carter finally went to bed. He really enjoyed his couch, and how long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened by the proprietor pounding on his door. He ate his breakfast and then pulled on his fox-skin coat.

"Well, do I hear you say a hundred dollars for that fur?" said he, as he put his hand on the door all ready to go out.

"No, that is more than I can afford to give," said the man. "You had better take what I offer, rather than send it off and run the risk of losing it."

Mr. Carter shook his head and bent his steps toward Percival Morton's house. He did not go up at once and ring the bell, but took to the opposite side of the street and waited there until he had seen Mr. Morton come out and go to his office, and then he mustered up courage enough to call upon Percival. The boy himself answered the

door-bell, and when he saw Mr. Carter standing there clad in his fox-skin coat, his countenance fell. He did not want to see that man at his house at all. He could associate with him while in the country, but in the village the case was different.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed. "What brought you here?"

"Put on your hat and come with me a little ways," said old man Carter. "I've got something to tell you."

"You can tell me here just as well as you can on the street," said Percival, looking up and down the road to see that no one with whom he was acquainted was coming. "I've got company."

"Well then I'll have to speak it here," said Mr. Carter, who readily understood the boy's indifference, for he got behind the door and stuck nothing but his head out. "Do you know the address of that hatter who agreed to give a hundred dollars for a white beaver skin?"

"No, I don't," said Percival.

"I have got a white beaver skin, and I

want to sell it," said Mr. Carter. "A fellow up here offered me seventy-five dollars for it, but I want a hundred."

"Where did you get a beaver skin of that color?" asked Percival in surprise.

"I stole it."

"Stole it? Who from?"

"From my boy Bob. He killed it at a long distance with that little worthless gun of his, took it home and hid it in the garret, and I got it when my wife was asleep. She doesn't know anything about it."

"Hold on till I get my hat and overcoat," said Percival, starting to close the door. "I'll go with you a little ways."

"Mebbe you'll get a chance to shoot that hound if you will go up to my camp with me," added old man Carter.

"Wait a minute and we'll talk it over. I tell you you have a chance to get even with Bob."

Mr. Carter, following a long-time habit, laid his finger by his nose and winked furiously at some inanimate object. This time it proved to be the picket fence which ran by the house. He walked slowly down the steps,

and in a few minutes Percival came out. He must have forgotten all about his "company," for he did not say anything about that. Mr. Carter watched him to see if he handled his crippled arm all right, and found that he could use it as well as the other. The marks of the dog's teeth did not trouble him at all. Percival saw the smile that spread over his face, and thought he would have to handle that arm a little more carefully.

"I told father how that hound had pitched into me, and he was very mad about it," said he. "He said that if I don't make an end of him he will go up there and shoot him, if it's in Bob's own dooryard. I told that storekeeper about him, and I presume he has killed him before this time."

"No, I don't reckon he has," said old man Carter. "If he had, I'd have heard of it."

"Bob has hunted the last time with that hound," said Percival with emphasis. "Now tell me all about the stealing of that white beaver skin." "And if I once get it in my hands you'll never see it again. I'll lose it when I send it on," he added to himself.

Old man Carter began and told the story of the stealing of the white beaver skin, but Percival did not believe more than half of it. He was satisfied that he had the skin, but how to get it in his possession he did not know. He was afraid that the man would come down to the village and see him send it off, and that was something he did not want him to do. He thought he had better make arrangements for that beforehand.

"I will go up to your camp with you and get the fur, and then I will bring it down here and send it off," said he. "You will stay up in camp until I get the money, and then I will bring it up to you."

"Well, I guess I won't do any such thing," said Mr. Carter, frowning fiercely. "Who are you going to send it to?"

"My father has the address of a good many hatters in New York, and no doubt he will give me some of them if I ask him to do it," said Percival, disappointed to find that he wasn't going to get hold of the skin as easily as he thought he was. "You ought to know that you are in danger as long as you stay here."

"I see I can't do anything with you," said old man Carter, pausing in his walk and turning back toward the house.

"Why, yes you can. I'll send the skin off for you."

"You will send it off if I will give the fur up to you, and then you will pocket the proceeds," said Mr. Carter, laying his finger beside his nose. "Mebbe I am foolish, perhaps I am, for I hain't ever been to school much, but I am not quite so foolish as that comes to. I can send the skin off myself."

Percival urged and pleaded in vain, for old man Carter had his mind made up, and when he once got that way "a meeting house wasn't sotter." He left Percival at his gate and bent his steps toward the fur-dealer's where he had passed the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STAGE-DRIVER'S WARNING.

WHEN old man Carter walked away from Percival Morton he was angry and disappointed—angry because he could not help thinking that the boy who had offered him five dollars for arresting Paul and Hugh if he found them shooting on his father's place should go back on him in that way, and disappointed to learn that Percival wanted to get the fur into his own possession so that he could cheat him out of his money. Finally he concluded that Bob's estimate of those boys was perfectly correct. He would have nothing more to do with them. When they came into the woods hunting, they could build their own camp and live in it. They shouldn't live with him any more.

Having thus got rid of the Morton boys Mr. Carter became interested in a little prob-

lem in mental arithmetic. The fur-dealer had offered seventy-five dollars for his fur; now how much would it amount to if he "split the difference" between that and a hundred dollars? He counted his fingers a long time before he made up his mind that if the dealer would give him eighty-seven dollars and a half he would let him have the skin.

"I guess that's right," said he, drawing up beside a building and counting his fingers over again. "If I had had the schooling that Bob has, I could make it out in short order; but I will tell the dealer that I will split the difference, and if he will give it, I will bring the skin down to him."

Old man Carter walked off with a brisk pace, and in a few minutes stood in front of the counter. When he told the dealer that he would split the difference with him, the man leaned his elbows on the board before him and whistled softly as he looked through the glass doors toward the sleighs that were moving along the street.

"I guess you didn't get your hundred dol-

lars out of somebody as easily as you thought you were going to," said he.

"No, I didn't. The man I went to didn't know the hatter's address, and neither do I."

"Well, you can't get home to-day anyway, and I will think about it between this time and to-morrow morning. Sit down and have a cigar."

"I have a good many provisions to buy, and I think I had better go out and do that first," said old man Carter. "You can think it over, but you can make up your mind that that is the least sum I will take for that skin."

The man went out, and when he returned two hours later he had a basket heavily loaded perched upon his shoulder. He set it down in one corner to wait until the stage went out on the morrow (the driver went up to Newport one day and came back the next), and by that time he found that the man behind the counter had thought over his proposition and was ready to agree to it. Twelve dollars and a half was a big sum to lose on one skin, but he thought he could stand it. Old man Carter was satisfied. He pulled off his coat,

accepted a cigar, and for the rest of the day lounged about with nothing to do. That was a mighty easy way of making a living, and Mr. Carter thought he would be glad to go into the business himself.

The next morning at an early hour his breakfast was waiting for him, and after Mr. Carter had paid his bill he took his basket and went out to the corner to wait until the stage came by. It came a little earlier than usual, and the driver pulled up his team while Mr. Carter put his basket in.

"Halloo, Carter; are you going to ride up with me?" he exclaimed. "You have been having some excitement up your way—two of them."

"Don't talk so loud," said Mr. Carter. "I'll sit on the front seat with you and tell you all about it. Are there no other passengers?"

No; old man Carter was all they had, and they didn't pick up any more on their journey to Newport. Mr. Carter was going to tell him all about it, but, come to find out, he didn't tell him any more than he knew al-

ready. He told him about the water breaking away the dam, and enlightened him in regard to some of the neighbors coming to his house with switches, but that was no news to the driver. He had heard it from a dozen different sources. Old man Carter was going on to offer some excuses for his neglect, but the driver interrupted him with—

"Well, there's some other little excitement up there. Bob has gone and killed a white beaver."

"Yes; I heard about that."

"That will make Bob rich if he can only keep the skin," continued the driver. "But if you come along and steal it——"

"What do I want to steal it for?" said the man, who believed he had got himself in another scrape. Why didn't he speak to the dealer about that and tell him to keep it still? But it was too late. His wit always came slowly.

"I don't know what you want to steal it for. Probably you know yourself. But I'll tell you what's a fact, Carter: If you steal that skin, I'll be one of your neighbors to

watch you night and day until we catch you; and when we get our hands on you the licking you'll get will be fearful."

The two men sat on the seat and looked at each other. Old man Carter had half a mind to make an impudent reply, but the driver was "built from the ground up," and he thought it would be best to keep a civil tongue in his head. The driver, seeing that he did not want to reply to his words, went on:

"Here's you, who have been getting a small fortune every year by watching those dams, and nobody knows what you did with the money. Bob has had to take care of his mother ever since he has been employed at the mill, and you haven't done a thing for her. He's going to get something nice for the money he gets for that skin, and you will be meaner than tophet if you take it away from him. But you want to mind your eye. Some of the neighbors have been talking pretty hard about you, and that is one of the things that won't blow over."

The driver, having freed his mind, did not think it necessary to address his passenger

again during the journey. Mr. Carter was ill at ease, and neither did he make any attempt to renew the conversation. He said not a word until his house hove in sight, and then he took his basket out of the sleigh—it had been snowing pretty freely the night before—and started for home. The driver bade him good-by, but old man Carter did not pay any attention to it. He walked up the steps and opened the door, and his wife knew in a moment that there was something the matter with him, for he did not even return her cheerful greeting.

"You got some provisions, didn't you?" said she. "Your arms will ache awfully before you get to your camp."

"Well, you need not lose any sleep on my account," said old man Carter. "Of course I got some provisions. Do you reckon I took all them miles down there to the village for fun? It is too far; and although I am pretty good at walking, I don't take any trips like that for the pleasure of it."

Mrs. Carter was worried, too, for what reply should she make if her husband demanded

to know if Bob had been at home while he was away? Bob came home on the evening of the same day that old man Carter had gone to the village for his provisions, and was greatly surprised that his mother did not go to the door with him to see the deer which he had brought home for her. Instead of that, she told him some bad news. The white beaver skin, on which he had been building such high hopes, was gone. For a few seconds Bob did not know what to say. It had come upon him like a thunder-clap from a clear sky. He drew a chair close to his mother and sat down.

"Yes, Bob, the fur is gone," said his mother, once more covering her face with her hands. "And there has been nobody here except Jed Brooks and your father."

"Jed didn't take it, that is plain enough to be seen, and I can lay the blame of it right onto father," said Bob as soon as he had recovered himself so that he could speak. "When did he take it?"

"On the same day that you came home before," was the reply. "He was here last

night, but there wasn't anything that he could steal. He has gone to the village now after some provisions."

"Did he have the skin with him when he came?"

"No, I think not. He had a bag with him which he said contained some mink and musk-rat skins, and which I might have examined if I had only thought of it."

"Then he has left the beaver fur out there in the woods," said Bob, earnestly. "When do you look for him back?"

"Not until to-morrow night. Where are you going?" asked his mother, as the boy sprung up from his chair.

"I am going to bring in that deer in the first place; and, in the next, I intend to go up and see the boys about it. Father has left a trail out there, and by following that we can easily find out where the skin is."

Mrs. Carter raised no objection. Mr. Carter had stolen the fur from Bob, and why should he not play the same game upon his father? He took it while Bob was in the woods, believing that he had left it in a safe

place, and she did not see anything wrong in Bob's recovering it in the same way. The boy went out and brought his deer into the house and laid it down on the floor for his mother to examine. She tried to get up a little enthusiasm, but Bob saw that it was a failure.

"Why, mother, you feel worse about that skin than I do," said Bob. "I am bound to have it again if father has left it anywhere about his camp. And when I do have it in my hands again I'll put it where he won't get it."

Bob lugged his deer into the kitchen, kissed his mother good-by, and, with Hector for company, took hold of the toboggan and walked off, whistling. He had already made up his mind what he would do with the beaver skin if he could once get it in his possession. He would give it to Hugh, and then he would like to see anybody get hold of it. The boys were surprised when they answered his knock at the door.

"Why, Bob, we didn't expect you to bring that toboggan back here to-night," exclaimed

Paul. "To-morrow would have done just as well."

"Yes; but I didn't come back here on account of the toboggan," answered Bob. "There has been some thieving going on at our house since we were here. Father has gone to work and stole that beaver skin."

"There!" exclaimed Hugh. "We talked the matter over while you were gone, and that was just the conclusion we came to. Why didn't you leave it here?"

"I never thought of it, and you never proposed it," said Bob. "Now I am going up into the woods bright and early to-morrow morning to hunt for that skin, and I'm going to find it, too. Will you go with me?"

"Of course we will," said Paul. "But I'll tell you what's a fact, Bob: you take the loss of that skin mighty easy. If I had a skin worth a hundred dollars in the possession of—a thief——"

Paul stopped and looked a little ashamed of what he had said. But then Mr. Carter was a thief, and Paul spoke his mind before he thought.

"Well, that is just what father is," said Bob. "He knew he was going to steal it when he had it in his hands. Now what shall we take with us? We expect to come back day after to-morrow, and we don't want to take much grub with us."

"But here's another thing, Bob," said Hugh. "Supposing we find your father in his camp?"

"But we won't, you see. He has gone to the village after provisions, and won't be back until to-morrow night."

"Well, that alters the case entirely," said Hugh, with a feeling of relief. "We'll search his camp, high and low, but that we'll find the skin. Come over at daylight, and we will have things all fixed. You need not take anything."

Bob dragged the toboggan up on the porch where it belonged, and breaking into his usual trot started for home. Of course he had nothing but cheery words to say to his mother when he got there, but he could not make her look happy to save his life. She had much to worry her and she was ill besides, and Bob

had a hard task before him. He finally left her, struck up a whistle, kindled a fire in the kitchen stove and went to work to get supper. Every now and then he would stop his labor and come to the door to say something pleasant to his mother, and by the time the meal was ready she began to act more like herself. She even asked him how he was going to find the skin, hidden as it was in the deep recesses of the woods, but that was something that Bob couldn't answer. Mr. Carter had left a trail in the snow, and by following that, he was certain he would succeed in his object.

The next morning just at daylight Bob presented himself before his two friends, whom he found all ready for the start. In four hours they were within reach of the woods, and then Bob began to look on the right-hand side of the trail to find the place where his father had come out. He did not find it, for the snow had covered it up, and finally he struck off through the trees in the direction in which he supposed his father's camp to be.

"Of course he will be near the marsh where the minks and muskrats are plenty," said he.

"Spread out now, boys, and if you strike his trail let me know it."

For two hours they traveled rapidly without finding any semblance of a trail, and at the end of that time a joyful whoop from Hugh showed that he had found the camp. The boys hurried up there, and found Hugh leaning on his gun and surveying the inside of the lean-to. It was old man Carter's lean-to, there could be no doubt about that, for there was the pickle-jar and the can that had contained the condensed milk still stowed away in one corner.

"And here's where Percival and Ben slept," said Paul. "Your father must have preferred their lean-to to his own, for you can see that he has been sleeping here. How he made out to keep from freezing beats me. Now, the next thing is to find the trail that leads to the hiding-place of the white beaver skin. What do you find there, Bob? I declare it's a trail. Old man Carter must have been out there pretty frequently, but the snow has come and covered it up. Go ahead, Bob."

Bob did not need any urging, but was following up the trail long before Paul spoke. He was more nervous now than he had been at any time since he had been told that his father had stolen the skin. It was true that the trail led toward a thicket of evergreens which would be a splendid place to put it, but how did he know but that his father had been there and taken the fur away? A few minutes would tell all he wished to know. He reached the evergreens, pushed his way into them, and stopped where the footprints he had been following ceased.

"The skin is up there," said Bob, handing his gun to one of his friends and running first to one side of the tree and then to the other and peering up into the branches. "Or, rather, it has been there, and I am going up to see about it."

Too excited to make any reply, the boys stood off and watched Bob as he climbed toward the top. Slowly he worked his way up, and presently, pushing aside a heavy branch which stood in his way, he saw the beaver skin hanging before him. With a joy-

ful cry he seized it, and, whirling around, dropped it at his comrades' feet.

"Well, sir, you have done it," said Hugh.

"Now let us get out of here before old man Carter comes up and asks us what we have been doing," said Paul. "Bob, old boy, your hundred dollars is safe yet."

Bob had by this time clambered down and took the skin with hands that trembled like a leaf. His father was just eighty-seven dollars and a half out of pocket. The skin was frozen stiff on the inside—you know that muskrat skins are turned inside out and stretched in that way—but that did not injure the skin any. A short time in front of the fire would thaw it out, and then it could be cleaned like any other fur.

"Let us go up to our old camp and spend the night there," said Hugh. "It is too late to go home. Well, Bob, I guess you feel better."

"I tell you I do," said the boy, who hardly knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. "And, Hugh, I am going to ask you to take care of this skin. When Paul finds

out what that hatter's address is we'll send it on."

"Of course I will take care of it, and I would like to see your father or anybody else get it," said Hugh. "I don't know what your father will do to you when he finds out that the fur has been stolen again."

"I don't know what he will do to me," answered Bob. "I think he will be pretty mad, but I can't help it. The skin is mine, and I have a right to take it wherever I can find it."

The boys fell in behind Paul, who led the way toward their camp, where they found everything just as they had left it. Hugh spread out their blankets under the lean-to, so that they would be ready to receive them when they were ready to go to bed; Paul began to rake the embers together to start a fire, and Bob gathered a supply of fuel to last them over night. In an hour supper was ready—Hector came in for a good share of it—and after spending a while in conversation the boys sought their couches and were soon in a sound sleep, Hector occupying his usual

position by the fire, and ready to tell them whenever any danger approached.

We said the boys were all in a sound sleep, but we ought to except Bob, who rolled and tossed on his blanket until long after midnight. He was busy thinking over the good things he was going to get for his mother, but every once in a while his father's face would appear before him, and Bob wondered what he would do when he found that he had lost the skin. He knew old man Carter would think of something else, something that would be sure to bother him, and the boy wondered what it could be.

"So long as he lets mother alone I am all right," said he to himself. "But he will go to worrying her and make her down sick. I wish father would go off to Chazy Lake and stay there. We get along so much better when he is away."

When morning came Bob was up before the others and started the coffee-pot boiling on the coals. Hector got up and lazily stretched himself, gave tongue once or twice as if he were saying good-morning, and then lay down

again. Paul and Hugh did not sleep any after this. They threw off their blankets and sat up, yawning as if they did not want to leave their warm beds.

"It is cold this morning, isn't it?" said Paul. "Did it snow any last night?"

"Not a flake, I am sorry to say," said Bob. "Our trail to the hiding-place of the white beaver skin is just as plain as it was yesterday, and father will have no trouble in following us. He'll know where the skin is gone in less than two minutes after he gets to his camp."

Breakfast was soon eaten, and after the boys had folded up their blankets they were ready for their march homeward. In due time they found themselves in the road that led by the grocery store, and then the walking became easier; but before they had made a dozen steps on the road they saw a figure in a fox-skin overcoat, with a rifle under his arm, and staggering along with a heavily-loaded basket which he had perched upon his shoulder.

"There's your father," said Hugh, rather surprised to meet the man there. "Let me have that skin."

Bob accordingly passed it over, and Hugh took it and hid it under his coat. Mr. Carter was coming toward them, and there was no chance of getting out of his way. He seemed astonished to find the boys, but as he came up he took the basket off his shoulder and placed it on the snow. If he had seen Hugh hide that skin under his coat he said nothing about it.

"You boys are just getting home, are you?" said he. "What sort of luck have you had?"

"We had as many deer as we wanted to draw home," said Hugh. "We forgot something and had to go back into the woods for it."

The man made some other remarks in regard to what they had been doing in the woods and where they had slept during the night, and then raised his basket to his shoulder again, saying that it would be dark before he reached his camp, and went on his way. The boys waited until he was out of sight, and then Paul inquired:

"Did he see you put that skin under your coat, Hugh?"

"I don't know whether he did or not," said Hugh. "He didn't say anything about it, at any rate."

"It is my impression that he did see it," insisted Hugh. "Look at that, Bob. You did not put the skin up high enough under your coat to conceal the tail. Old man Carter knows where that fur is as well as we do."

Bob examined Hugh's coat, and sure enough there was the tail of the beaver sticking out in plain sight. Mr. Carter would have been blind if he had not seen it.

"It is all up with me, boys," said Bob, drawing a long breath. "He will go up and find that the beaver skin is gone, and then he will come back to the house, and mercy knows what he will do when he gets there."

"You forgot something, did you, and you had to go back into the woods for it?" said old man Carter, who was fairly boiling over with rage. "I know what you forgot; it was that beaver fur. Now, who in the world could have told him about that? I know I've kept a still tongue in my head ever since I

hung that fur up there. Now the next thing is something else."

Old man Carter was in such haste to reach his camp that he never put the basket down to rest until he got there. It was dark before he reached his camp, but he very soon had a fire lighted; then he gathered up something that would do for a torch and began an examination of the ground. The prints of the boys' feet were there plain enough, and they led directly to the thicket of evergreens in which the white beaver skin had been hidden. Not satisfied with that, Mr. Carter went on to the thicket, climbed the tree and found that the beaver skin was gone. He felt now a good deal as Bob must have felt when he first learned that his beaver fur had been stolen.

"Eighty-seven dollars out of my pocket," growled old man Carter, as he climbed down and went back to his fire. "How can I get that skin again? That's what bothers me. But there is one thing about it: Bob will get his money for it, but I would like to see him keep it. That needs a heap of thinking."

Mr. Carter pulled out his pipe and pro-

ceeded to fill it, after which he sat and smoked for a long time. Finally he straightened up and pounded his knee with his clenched hand. He had found out how to get the money away from Bob.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PLAN THAT DIDN'T WORK.

"BY gracious, Ben, what do you think? Bob made his fortune while he was there in the woods. With that single-barrel shotgun of his, which he couldn't give as a present to either one of us, he killed a white beaver up on the shores of South pond."

Ben was lying down on the lounge when his brother came in, but he straightened up when he heard this news and looked at his brother without speaking. School was in session now, but these boys did not attend only when they felt like it. They were way behind in their classes, but managed in some way to pass the examination so that they would not be dropped; but knowing that Percival and Ben wanted to go to college, the professor had ordered them to get some Latin books and be ready to take up the study when this term

began. But Latin was too hard for them. They managed to keep along with the other boys until they reached the verb "*sum*," and there they stopped. They concluded that they would stay out of school until the others had committed the verb, and then they would begin school again; and that was the reason they were at home when old man Carter called upon them. Their "company," we ought to say, existed only in Percival's imagination. Their father did not raise any objection to this—he was too busy in his office to pay much attention to his boys—and their mother allowed them to do as they pleased. It was not very probable that boys such as they were could grow up into pushing men. Furthermore, their father was worth considerable money, and when he got through with it, it would all fall to the boys. He was supposed to be worth twenty-five thousand dollars, enough to make him the wealthiest man in town; but somehow the mill owners had been accumulating property until they could point to possessions that would bring four times that amount. That was what made Mr. Mor-

ton jealous of them. As long as he was looked up to as the richest man in the county he was a very agreeable companion, and touched his hat to everybody he met on the street; but he could not bear the idea that anybody else should have more money than he had.

"Bob shot that white beaver, but he hasn't got the skin now," continued Percival, seating himself on the lounge beside his brother, "and I am glad of it. His father went into the house when he was away and stole it; and Bob's mother doesn't know anything about it."

"Good enough," exclaimed Ben.

"Now I tried to get the skin away from him while I was walking with him," said Percival. "I was very much afraid that somebody would come along and find me with him, and so I told him that we had company. I proposed that he should give me the skin and stay up there in his camp until I got the money for him, and then I would take it up to him."

"Well, he was a fool if he agreed to any

such thing as that," said Ben, with a laugh. "It is mighty little of that money he would see if he let it pass through your hands."

"He didn't agree to it. He seemed to know what was on my mind. We would put that hundred dollars in our pockets. I guess they would be worth just as much to us as they would to old man Carter."

"Would you have the money sent to you?"

"Of course I would, and we would say that the skin was lost somewhere on the road. He wouldn't dare make any fuss about it, for he stole the skin. I would have a receipt from the agent here, and could show it to him."

"But suppose he wanted to know what man you sent it to?"

"Then of course I would tell him, and he would write on to the hatter and learn that the man had received a package from here and that it contained nothing but paper, or something of that sort. We would keep the skin until everybody had forgotten about it, and then we would send it off and get our money for it. I had it all fixed up in my mind just how I was going to do it, but that

is all over now. Old man Carter wouldn't do it."

Percival then went on to tell his brother about the conversation he had held with Mr. Carter—it was short and he had no difficulty in remembering it—and when he gave an account of the man's closing words Ben was as angry as he was.

"That old fellow thinks a heap of the white beaver skin that he stole, doesn't he?" said Ben. "I just thought of something. Bob has got home from the woods now, and what is the reason we can't shoot that hound for chewing you up that way?"

"You know I spoke to Mr. Roberts about it, but I don't believe he has raised his hand against the dog. I would be glad to shoot him, but the truth of the matter is, I am afraid of Bob," said Percival honestly.

"There is no need of Bob seeing us at all," said Ben. "You know Martin Walcott, don't you?"

Percival jumped up from the lounge and gazed at his brother with admiration. Why did he not think of that boy Walcott before?

"I tell you, Ben, you have hit upon the very idea," said he. "Walcott has nothing to do——"

"Nothing to do in the world but roam around with that rifle on his shoulder and his father's coat-tails flapping about his heels," chimed in Ben. "Mart will go up there and shoot him in Bob's own dooryard, and Bob wouldn't dare raise a hand to defend his dog."

"That's the very thing we wanted to think of," repeated Percival. "How much do you suppose we shall have to give him for it?"

"Five dollars are a plenty. He will go up for that. Let us go down and see if we can find him now."

This proposition just suited Percival, who went into the hall and soon reappeared with his hat and overcoat on. Ben was ready almost as soon as he was, and they started towards Walcott's house, not forgetting to take in the post-office on the way. There were plenty of farmers in there, but they had nothing to say to them. They glanced into their father's empty box, and then came out and continued their walk.

"It makes me mad to think how Bob Carter would have been treated by those men we saw in the post-office," said Percival, who would have been glad if he could have got the better of the farmers in some way. "Every one of those Yahoos would have had something to say to him. It would be 'Halloo, Bob!' here, and 'How are you, Carter?' there, until it would make one sick."

"I don't see how it comes that a boy can be so familiar with such fellows as Paul and Hugh," said Ben. "Bob hasn't got any money."

"No, but it is all in his cheek. And that dog of his is what does the business for him. If we can find Walcott at home that hound will not be with him much longer. They will drop him like a hot potato after that dog has gone up."

It was a long walk to Walcott's house, for he lived in the outskirts of the village, on a little farm which yielded scanty returns for the feeble cultivation that he and his lazy old father bestowed on it, and when they reached the end of their journey they were surprised

to find the boy of whom they were in search sawing wood in the back yard. They were surprised because Walcott did not relish anything like work any more than Percival did when he went to school. He looked up when the boys called to him, laid down his saw and sauntered leisurely up to the fence.

"You are getting up an appetite for your dinner, are you?" said Ben. "That is the way I got my start in life."

"Well, it is a mighty poor way, I can tell you that," said Walcott. "I never feel easy except I am in the woods with my rifle on my shoulder. We don't get any deer nowadays, because there are so many fellows who have hounds that they scare them all away. What brought you boys up here? We don't often see you in these parts."

"We came up here to engage you to do some business for us," said Percival, who wanted the matter settled one way or the other. "I am glad to see that you are down on hounds, because I am down on them, too. You know that dog that Bob Carter has?"

"Yes, I know him. That hound has driven

away more than one deer that I was going to shoot. It would be a fine thing for me if that dog was dead."

"And you are not the only one he pitches on, either. I was in camp about two weeks ago, and that hound jumped on me and tore my arm up fearful."

"Humph!" said Walcott. "What did you do to him?"

"Nothing at all. I was lying by my fire, and he bounced onto me."

"Why didn't you shoot him? I'd like to see a man's hound jump on me that way."

"That's just what I want to do, but I don't want Bob to see me do it. He says that anybody who shoots that dog will have to shoot him, too."

"Pshaw!" sneered Walcott, straightening himself up, as if that was a very simple thing to do. "I'll bet I can kill that dog right before his eyes and he won't dare open his head."

"Will you do it?" said Ben, eagerly.

"If the dog jumps on me I will."

"I will give you five dollars when you

bring me notice that Hector is out of the way," said Percival.

"Well, that is a heap of money, but it is hardly enough for doing a job like that. It is a long ways up there, and I shall have to camp out one night."

"Camping out is not anything to you. You have camped alone in the woods more times than I could count."

"I didn't have any such job as that to do. I went because I wanted some money."

"I would rather have you than anybody else, for you are not afraid to shoot him in Bob's own dooryard," continued Percival, who knew that Walcott was looking for another five dollars. "You would shoot him right in front of Bob's face and think nothing of it."

Walcott was a boy who liked flattery. He was about eighteen years old, and in all his life he had never been to school a single day. He loafed about the village, and often got into bad company. He had the reputation of being a desperate fellow—he had been caught once in the act of robbing a henroost,

which sent him to the penitentiary for thirty days—and for that reason all the decent boys in the village wanted to steer clear of him. He looked down at the ground and turned Percival's scheme over in his mind, and a bright idea occurred to him.

"It is true that I ain't afraid of Bob Carter nor a dozen like him," said he. "But you don't want to give me enough. Say ten dollars for the job, and it shall be done. I'll go up to-morrow."

"Oh, that is too much," said Percival.

"You can give me five of it here before I start—I've got some ammunition to buy—and the other five when I come home and tell you that the dog is dead," said Walcott. "That isn't any too much. I may be three or four days before I come back."

"It is too much, I tell you, but then I will give it. I am so anxious to have that dog rubbed out that I would give—humph!" said Percival, pulling out his pocket-book. He unfolded it, and Wolcott caught sight of a roll of bills that made him open his eyes.

"You have a mighty good dad to give you all that money," said he.

"Yes. He gives us five dollars every week. I don't believe that Paul and Hugh have that much to spend."

"I don't believe they have either," said Walcott, accepting the bill that Percival gave him. "If I had known that you had that amount of money, I would have charged you fifteen for doing the job. That's more money than I have seen in all my born days."

"Now, remember, you are to shoot that dog wherever you find him," said Ben, who was delighted to know that Walcott had been won over to their side so easily. "No matter if you find him in Bob's presence or his father's, you are to knock him over. I won't have my brother bitten that way for nothing."

"I wouldn't either," said Walcott, as he stowed away the bill in one of his pockets. "But there's one thing you didn't think of. Suppose Bob sees me shoot that dog, can't he bring me up before the justice of the peace? I have been up before that man once, and I don't want to see him again."

"No, he can't," said Percival, emphatically. "The dog has got to be worth money before you can be tried for killing him, and that's more than anybody can say of that hound. He is not worth a copper."

"Now, you will go up to-morrow and attend to his case, will you?" inquired Ben. "We shall not rest easy until you come back."

"By this time to-morrow the hound, if I can find him at home, shall be dead," answered Wolcott; and he seemed so confident in speaking of it that the boys began to feel confident, too. "You go home and sleep in peace. He shall never tear you up again. Good-by."

"I am glad that Bob's hound is done for at last," said Ben, as they retraced their steps to the village and Walcott returned to his woodpile. "There is one thing you promised that I don't believe you mean to keep. Do you intend to give him his five dollars when he comes back?"

"No, sir. The dog will be dead, and that is all I care for," said Percival, with a laugh.

"At any rate Bob can't go hunting with him any more, and that will be one point gained."

"I know a story worth two of that one that Percival told me," said Walcott as he went back to his work. "He wasn't doing anything, and yet the hound jumped on him. Now, it strikes me that the hound didn't do that. He was going to lick him for something, and the hound turned on him. Well, I've got five dollars mighty easy, and I'll bet it isn't the last I'll get. What a wad he had in his pocket-book, hadn't he? I wish I could catch him off alone somewhere. He wouldn't see that money again."

Walcott kept on with his work, but somehow he did not feel like doing so much as he did before those boys came up to see him. He sawed a few more sticks, then put on his coat and went to the village for his ammunition. He was gone all the afternoon, going without his dinner, and when he came back he began to prepare for his trip on the morrow. He even wished that he could stay at home, and by keeping out of sight of the boys for a day or two he could tell them that he had killed

Bob's hound and demand the balance of his five dollars; but on the whole he concluded that that would not do. He must be seen by three or four of the farmers, whom he would be certain to meet on the way, and by them he could prove that he was on his way to the woods.

"I've got to make the trip, and that's all about it," said Walcott, whose bones ached when he thought of the eighteen miles that lay between him and Bob Carter's house. "I wish I had charged him fifteen dollars for the job. Well, when I get home perhaps I can make up some story that will induce him to come down with another dollar or two."

The next morning at an early hour Walcott set out on his tramp, with a blanket slung over his shoulder and provisions enough in his long-tailed coat to last him for three days. On his way to Bob Carter's house he met several farmers, but each one, knowing the reputation of the boy, had nothing to say to him. In fact, Walcott's mind was not on his errand at all. He could not forget the roll of money he had seen in Percival's pocket-book. He

supposed, of course, that there must be a pile of currency in that roll, as much as twenty-five or thirty dollars, and what could he do if he had that amount in his possession?

"I would get some better clothes than these I have on, I bet you," said Walcott, looking down at himself. "Here I have to go and take dad's duds, his hat, coat and boots, and I have to wear them out because I can't earn any money to buy more. Where would I go after I got the money? Well, these woods are pretty big, and I'll bet the constable wouldn't catch me if I once got a day's start."

Walcott was so completely wrapped up in these reflections that it was four o'clock before he knew it, and the house in which Bob lived was in plain sight. Now he had to think about the object he had in view, and he concluded that he would see how Bob looked before he attempted to shoot his dog. He had not seen Bob for a long time, and then he noticed that he was getting to be almost the size of a man, and that he had muscles that Walcott did not care to face.

"I'll go up to his house and ask where the

old man is," said Walcott to himself, "and then I shall have a fair chance to look at Bob. If I find that he has swelled out more than he ought to about the shoulders, I won't say a word about shooting his dog. I can make up some sort of a story to tell Percival when I get home."

Walcott walked slowly down the side street keeping an eye open for Bob and Hector, but the house was as quiet as if it had been deserted. The ones he wanted to find were off in the woods looking for that white beaver skin that Mr. Carter had stolen, but Walcott did not know that until he rapped at the door. Bob's mother answered the summons, and Walcott made an awkward attempt to touch his hat as he had seen the boys in the village do when entering a strange house.

"Bob has gone into the woods and won't be back until to-morrow night," said Mrs. Carter.

"Thank you, mum," said Walcott. "Can you tell me where old man—I mean Mr. Carter—is?"

"He is in the woods too, but I don't know where."

"Of course Bob has taken his dog with him?" said Walcott, thinking that if he had left him at home he would have a first rate chance to kill him then and there.

"Oh, yes. Bob always takes Hector with him."

Walcott touched his hat again and went away. There was only one thing he could do now, and that was to go into the woods, pick out a nice place for a camp and remain there until Bob came back, which would be just a little before dark. Camping out was not anything to him, for, as Percival had said, he had spent more nights in that way than he could count; but he did not like the idea of camping alone. He wanted someone to talk to.

"I'll see Bob to-morrow, and then I believe I will go in and see old man Carter about that pocket-book," said Walcott, a bright idea striking him. "He want's money and I believe he will jump at the chance."

This was the thought that had been uppermost with Walcott all that day, and he thought that with Mr. Carter's assistance he could get all Percival's savings without any

resistance on his part; but the trouble was, he did not care to divide the profits with any outside party. Old man Carter would want half of what he made, and that would leave him with a very small portion of the money to buy his clothes with. While he was thinking about it he entered the woods and speedily found a good place for his camp. It was in a thicket of evergreens which would protect him in case a storm should come up, and he threw down his blanket, pulled the provisions out of his pockets, discarded his long-tailed coat, and made ready to get himself fixed for the night.

The next morning he was up by daylight, but he had not made up his mind whether he would ask old man Carter to help him or not. And he had not made up his mind, either, during the long hours he passed in the outskirts of the woods watching for the appearance of Bob and his dog. There was one thing he saw which led him to believe that Mrs. Carter had not told him the truth when she said that her husband was away in the woods. He saw him go by with the stage-driver on his way to Newport.

"I think I can find him if I decide to get him to help me," said Walcott. "He's up near that marsh to trap minks and muskrats, and he's made some money already. Well, I don't blame him for taking to the woods. I would go there myself if my neighbors should come around my house with hickory switches in their hands."

At length, to his immense relief, Bob and Hector hove in sight. Bob did not act much as he did when he found that his white beaver skin was gone. He was whistling, and his dog was running along ahead to see if he could not scare up a rabbit on the way. Bob looked to be a pretty good-sized boy at a distance. He was "swelled out about the shoulders" a good deal, and Walcott thought that the best thing he could do would be to let him alone. Besides, he had his old single-barrel on his shoulder, and if Walcott attempted anything wrong with him he might rest assured that he would not come off first best. He got up from the log on which he was sitting and walked down the road to meet Bob, who seemed very much surprised to see him there.

"How do you do, Bob?" asked Walcott, and he made an ungainly effort to touch his hat and bow at the same time, and that was enough to arouse Bob's suspicions. He had never seen Walcott in an attempt to appear graceful before. He simply bowed, but said nothing.

"What did you get?" continued Walcott.

"I got all I went after," said Bob, and he kept on his way without stopping.

"Hold on, Bob; I want to tell you something," said Walcott. "Do you know that there are some fellows around here who have sworn to kill that dog?"

"Who are they?" said Bob, pausing in his walk; and it flashed upon him that the boy who was talking to him was one of the "fellows" that he would have to look out for. "I suppose that Percival Morton is one of them."

"You have hit it the first time trying," said Walcott. "He offered me five dollars if I would kill that dog, but I did not come up here for that purpose. The dog doesn't bother me any, but he jumped on Percival and bit his arm."

"And Percival was trying to whip him when he did it," said Bob, and it was plain enough to be seen that he was growing angry. "That happened two weeks ago, and I haven't got rid of the dog yet. You tell Percival for me that he had better keep his hands off."

"Oh, he's too big a coward to touch anything," said Walcott, who forgot that he had come up there for the purpose of shooting Hector, but after he had seen Bob he didn't dare to try it. "Where is your father now?"

"He is in his camp."

"Where's his camp?"

"Out near the marshes."

Bob kept an eye on Walcott and Hector during his walk to the house, but he did not see the boy take his rifle from his shoulder. Bob was a bigger man than Walcott thought for, and the next thing must be to make up a story to tell Percival. He was bound to have that other five dollars if there was any possible chance for him to get it.

CHAPTER XV.

WALCOTT PLOTS HIGHWAY ROBBERY.

TO say that Walcott was disgusted and angry with himself when he walked away from Bob would be putting it very mildly. He had a chance to shoot the dog but had never done it, and he never would have such a chance again. When Hector stood there looking at him he could have stepped back, cocked his gun, and that would have been the last of him; but he could not help thinking what Bob would have been doing all that time.

"Pshaw!" said Walcott, turning about and looking at Bob, who was just then going up the steps into the house. "I could have turned my gun wrong end to and easy have knocked him down. Now that hound will live to drive away some more deer that I want to shoot, and I must go back to camp and hatch up some

story for Percival and Ben. But Bob is getting to be a mighty big fellow, that's a fact."

He was headed down toward the big road that led to the village, and he kept on as though he was going there for fear that Bob might keep watch of him; but when he got down the road half a mile or more he turned off through the fields, and after an hour's steady walking he reached his camp. It was easier to go to that camp than it was to build a new one. The fire was all handy, he had a place fixed for his bed, and there he determined to stay until morning, when he would start to find old man Carter. But what should he say to him when he found him?

"I guess I'll let that go until I see how he acts," said Walcott, raking up the embers of his fire and trying to get a blaze started. "If he acts as though he wanted to whip somebody, I'll try him on about that pocket-book; but if he is good-natured I won't say a word about it. I'll do the best I can by myself."

A person to have heard this soliloquy would have supposed that Walcott had made up his mind to try highway robbery, and he would

not have been far out of the way. It was as he told Percival when he saw the money—"he had never seen so much in all his born days," and he knew he could not get so much by working for it. There was literally nothing about the village that he could get to do. Everyone was suspicious of him, and they were afraid that he would steal something before he left the premises; so all he could do was to wear out his father's clothes as fast as that man got done with them.

"It's mighty hard luck that I have, anyway," said Walcott, as he got his fire started and went off into the woods for a new armful of fuel. "I can work all day, and nobody will ever think of giving me a dollar unless I happen to meet some people who haven't got any sense, like Percival Morton. Their father gives them five dollars every week, and so Ben must have just as much more in his pocket. I'll have that pocket-book before I sleep soundly."

Filled with such thoughts as these, Walcott did not enjoy a good night's rest, but he left his bed long before the sun was up, and ate the rest of his crackers and bacon before

he set out to find old man Carter. The road he had to follow led directly past Bob Carter's house, and when he went by there he carried his gun in the hollow of his arm, all ready to draw a bead on Hector if he found him outside and Bob was not there to protect him. But the hound was lying on his rug behind the dining-room stove, all unconscious of the plot that was being laid against him. He kept on by Hugh Pratt's house without seeing any signs of life there, but by the time he got to Newport he found three or four men stirring about, but no one had a word to say to him. They saw him with his gun on his shoulder going toward the woods, and let him pass on without speaking. They did not think that a boy who had been in the penitentiary was worth speaking to.

"That's the way that everybody treats me," said Walcott, who knew what the men were thinking about. "If I had as much money as Percival's got, every one of them would want to know where I was going and what I expected to get before I came back. Well, it won't be so always."

Walcott now began to look out for old man Carter's trail, for he believed that he could follow that much more readily than he could by striking off alone and hunting for his camp without knowing where it was. After due search he found it, and then progress was easy enough. At the end of three hours he discovered the camp, and as there was a smoke rising from behind it, he concluded that old man Carter was at home. He was right in his suspicions, for as he drew nearer the sound of his feet on the snow attracted the attention of somebody behind the lean-to, for presently a head appeared above the top of the camp.

"How do you do, Mr. Carter?" exclaimed Walcott.

"Well, what evil genius sent you prowling around here?" said the man, who, like all the rest of the people in the neighborhood, did not care to have anything to do with Walcott.

"I came out hunting, and I found your trail back there, and I wanted to see where it led to," answered Walcott.

"Now that you have found out, hadn't you better go on?" asked old man Carter.

"Yes, I believe that I can go on; but I see that you are getting ready to have a late dinner, and I didn't know but you would ask me to eat it with you," said Walcott. "What did you do with that fine beaver skin you stole from Bob?"

"I didn't steal any skin from him," said the man, with an angry flush in his face.

"Somebody has told it all around that you did steal it, and I do not see what is the use of your denying it. Have you got the skin hidden around here somewhere?"

Old man Carter did not know what reply to make to this. Ever since he discovered that the skin was gone he had not been out to attend to his traps at all. He had lain there on his bed, smoked up a good many pipes of tobacco, and worried his brain about the way he would manage to get the money out of Bob. It is true that he had hit upon a way, but that way didn't suit him. There were a good many things to be taken into consideration. If he could coax Bob out into the

woods, he would hold him prisoner until he surrendered at least half of the money; but he didn't know whether he could do that or not. Bob might give his money into the hands of Mr. Smith for safe keeping, and the longer old man Carter thought over his plan, the worse it seemed to be to him. He was thinking over various other plans for getting the advantage of Bob when he was interrupted by the sound of Walcott's feet crunching the snow.

"If you have hidden the skin around here, and Bob can find out where it is," said Walcott, "why he——"

"He has found it out already," snarled Mr. Carter. "I left it hung up in that thicket of evergreens, and he found out where it was and came here and took it. Who told you about it?"

"I suppose that Mrs. Pratt started the story. She has been down to the village and she told Mr. Smith about it; and Smith, he was so proud——"

"How did Mrs. Pratt know anything about it?" interrupted old man Carter.

"I don't know, unless Bob took it to the house to show her. How do you know that he came here and got it?"

"I met those three boys on the road, and I saw the tail of the beaver sticking out from under Hugh's coat. I was a fool that I did not go to work and take it away from him."

"Well, Smith was so proud of what Bob had done that he told it to everybody, and that's the way it got around. That dealer knows it too, and he says he will not buy the skin of you. He agreed to give you eighty-seven dollars and a half for it——"

"Whoop!" yelled old man Carter. "It beats all the world how you do find out things."

"I haven't got anything else to do, you know. And I want to tell you that I was paid five dollars to shoot that hound of Bob's."

"Percival Morton gave you that, I'll bet."

"He did, and he is going to give me five dollars when I get home and tell him that the dog is dead."

"Well, if you know when you're well off

you'll keep your hands off that dog," said Mr. Carter, frowning fiercely upon Walcott. "The fellow who shoots that dog will get himself into trouble."

"Why, don't he drive off the deer that you want to shoot?" asked Walcott in surprise.

"That's neither here nor there. Percival wanted to whip the hound, and so he turned on him. That dog has just as much right to live as you have, and you want to be careful what you point that rifle at before you shoot."

"I didn't come up here to shoot the dog ——"

"No, I reckon not," said old man Carter with a grin.

"I didn't, honest. I came up here to go deer hunting; but I saw something in Percival's pocket-book that made my eyes stick out as big as saucers."

"What was it? It wasn't money, I reckon?"

"Well, it was money. Their father gives them some money every week, and of course they can't spend it here in the village."

"What do you propose to do about it? Would you like that pocket-book?"

"You're mighty right I would. I don't see what's the use of a fellow having so much money when I can't have any."

"You know you tried to rob a henroost once," said old man Carter.

"I know it, and the reason I done it was because we wanted something to eat," said Walcott. "I guess any man would try to rob a henroost under them circumstances. Wouldn't you?"

"I have always made my living easier than that. Now what do you intend to do in regard to that pocket-book?"

"I am a-going to get Percival and Ben out here in the woods. Can I tell them that you want to see them?"

"No, by gracious, you can't!" exclaimed old man Carter emphatically. "You can't get me into trouble that way. I've got men enough down on me now. If you want to get that pocket-book you can get it by yourself."

"I thought you would be willing to do it," said Walcott, who was very much disappointed

at this decision. "You want money as bad as I do."

"Yes, but I am going to get it in another sort of way. Don't you say one word to Percival about me. If you do, you and I will come together."

"Well, ain't your dinner ready yet?" asked Walcott. "I am most starved, for I haven't had a bite to eat to-day."

"It don't make any difference if you don't get a bite till to-morrow night," said old man Carter earnestly. "A boy who wants to get me into jail is a boy I don't want around me. Come, now, get up and clear yourself."

Walcott got up, shouldered his rifle and walked slowly away; but before he had made many steps old man Carter called to him.

"Mind you, now, you want to keep your eyes shut when you go by that house of our'n, or else you'll see Hector prowling around in that yard," said he. "Don't you point that gun at him, for if you do—well, you know what I mean by that."

Walcott kept on his way without saying anything, and a few turns among the trees

left Mr. Carter's camp out of sight. It seemed as if bad luck attended him at every turn. He did not dare shoot the hound because Bob was there to protect him, and old man Carter was down on his stealing that pocket-book. He wished now that he had not said anything to him about it, for it was bound to get all over the neighborhood, and Walcott was not so certain that he could get away if Mr. Carter came after him. The latter was an old hunter and he would see his footprints wherever he went.

"I just won't give up that pocket-book, and that's all there is about it," said Walcott, settling his rifle firmly on his shoulder and stepping out for home. "And there I was almost starving to death, and he never offered me a bite of his dinner. I'll get the better of old man Carter yet."

It did not take Walcott as long to reach Newport and pass by the houses of Hugh Pratt and Bob Carter as it did in coming up, for he found that he couldn't get anything to eat until he got home, and he stepped at his best pace. It was almost daylight when he

reached home, tired and hungry, and without pulling off his clothes he flung himself on the bed and slept soundly until twelve o'clock. When he was awake he didn't feel like getting up, but he remembered that he had a piece of work to perform, and that was to get that other five dollars out of Percival Morton. He could not rest easy until he had that in his pocket. About the story he would tell the boys he never bothered his head, although he had often settled himself to think about it.

"I'll do as I did with old man Carter," said he, as he performed a rude toilet and tried to fix himself up so that he would not attract attention on the street. "I'll wait and see how he acts. Now, shall I tell him that Mr. Carter wants to see him or not? That's what troubles me more than anything else."

Walcott did not wait to get his dinner, for he wanted to finger that extra five dollars that Percival had promised to give him in case he killed that hound. He left his gun at home this time, and took all the back streets until he reached the one on which Percival Morton lived. He was not at all bashful, but went at

once to the door and rang the bell. He concluded that Percival would be just as anxious to give him the money as he was to get it; but if he found any difficulties in his way, Walcott would have the matter in his own hands. He would tell all around that Percival had promised him ten dollars for getting Hector out of his way, and then gave him only five of it.

"I'll get the better of you, my fine fellow, if you don't come down with that extra money to pay me for my trip up there," said Walcott to himself, as he waited at the door for somebody to answer his summons. "The five dollars is mine, and I'm a-going to have it."

Now it chanced that Percival had been sitting at the window waiting for his father to come up from the office, so that they could have dinner, and he had seen Walcott when he approached the house. He was so anxious to get through with him before his father came that he answered the bell almost as soon as it was done ringing.

"This is no place for you to come," said Percival, with a frown on his brow. "Go

away, and I will meet you some time this afternoon."

"That dog is dead," said Walcott. "I had a miserable time getting him, too. Look at that," he added, lifting up his hat and pointing to an imaginary bump on his forehead. "Bob was there, and I had to knock him down before I could shoot the dog."

"Well, I am expecting my father home every minute, and you must get away before he comes," said Percival, making an effort to shut the door. "I will see you some time this afternoon."

"You might as well give me that money now as an hour later," said Walcott, and his face showed that he was growing angry. "I've got some grub to buy for the old woman, and I want to get it done now. By the way, old man Carter wants to see you."

"I have nothing to do with old man Carter," said Percival, who, thinking that the best way to be rid of his unpleasant visitor was to pay him his money and let him go, put his hand into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. "If he wants to see me he had better come down

here, but he must not come near the house. Now, there's your money. Take it and clear yourself."

"That's a pretty way for you to talk to me when I have shot that hound for you," said Walcott. He had not neglected to take an inside view of Percival's pocket-book, and he found that the bills were all there. If he could only get Percival to promise that he would go up and call upon Mr. Carter, that pocket-book would soon change owners. "He doesn't want to say anything to you about the dog. He was as mad as you were when he bit you that way. He's got something on hand—I don't know what, because he wouldn't tell me—and he wants your opinion of it. It is something that Bob has something to do with."

"I will think about it. Now you want to make yourself scarce about here."

"But you must come up and tell me when you are going," said Walcott, "and I won't never come near your house any more. It's something that I have got to help, and he made me promise that I wouldn't come with-

out you. There's one thing about it: you won't see Hector up there."

"Where's Carter now?"

"He's in his camp; and he was that impatient to see you that it was all I could do to keep him from coming with me."

"If I conclude to go I will see you again this afternoon. Now, do not come here again."

"I won't; and you will find me sawing wood just as you did before. "Good-by."

Walcott went down the steps, and Percival closed the door behind him with a bang. He did not think it necessary to respond to his friendly farewell, but bolted into the sitting-room, where his brother was waiting for him.

"Did you give it to him?" asked Ben.

"I had to," answered Percival, in disgust. "He was all ready to make a scene in case I did not do it. What do you suppose Carter wants to see me for?"

"I don't know," said Ben, who, standing close to the door, had heard all that passed between Walcott and Percival. "But I think it would be just as well for us to go up there

and interview him. Walcott was bound to have his money, wasn't he?"

"Yes; but if he hadn't come here he wouldn't have got it. I would have put him off some way. I wonder what old man Carter can want of me, anyway?"

This was the matter that took up all the boys' attention till their father came home to dinner, but neither one of them could guess at the reason. Walcott said it was something in regard to Bob, and with that they were obliged to be satisfied.

Meanwhile Walcott was going along, his hand buried in his pocket, and as happy as a boy could well be. On the corner he met Mr. Morton, who never noticed him at all. He was walking off, with his lofty air, and did not seem to see anybody. Walcott clutched his bill with a firmer grip, and smiled complacently when he reflected that he had some of that man's money stowed away about his tattered clothes.

"He don't know that I have it, and that by this time to-morrow I'll have more," said Walcott. "There must be as much as

fifty dollars in those two boys' pocket-books, and that is more money than I ever saw in my life. I'll go up about Chazy Lake, and there I'll stay until I can buy me some good clothes. I won't go around in this way any longer."

Walcott stopped on the way home to purchase some bacon and crackers—if he was going up to Chazy Lake he would need a good supply to last him—and finally drew up at his own house. His mother was there, but she paid just about as much attention to him as the rest of the townspeople did. She sat in front of the fireplace, with her pipe tightly clasped between her teeth, and allowed him to do as he pleased. He built up a fire in the cook-stove, and fried about half the bacon before he stopped; and then he went into his room and brought out his game-bag and put the bacon and crackers into it, without taking the trouble to wrap them up in anything. After that he thought it was about time he was looking for Percival.

"I know he will come," said Walcott, as he picked up his saw and went out to the wood-

pile, "and that was the reason I spoke Bob's name. For some purpose or another he is down on Bob—perhaps it was because his dog bit him—and he will do anything to get even with him. There they come now. I got out here just in time."

Walcott laid down his saw and walked up to the fence to wait for his visitors. Of course he was very profuse in his greetings, but the boys took no notice of that. Percival began the conversation at once.

"Are you sure that you don't know what old man Carter wants of us?" said he.

"I don't know any more about it nor the man in the moon," said Walcott earnestly. "He wouldn't tell me, but he allows to tell me when you go back there with me."

"I should think he might have told you at once and without any of this nonsense," said Percival, impatiently. "You can't do anything to help us."

"Well, the old man seems to think that I can. I tried my level best to pump him, but he wouldn't be pumped."

"I suppose we shall have to go," said Per-

cival, turning to his brother; and the look that came upon Walcott's face showed how excited he was. He trembled so much that the boys would have seen it if they had not been so wholly engrossed with another matter. "But, say, Walcott, we don't like to be seen going out there in your company. Everybody will see the stage-driver when he goes along, and the best thing you can do will be to go out there to-night. We are going to start to-morrow morning."

"I don't object to that," said Walcott, readily. "A boy who has been in the penitentiary don't want to be seen too much in company with fellows like you. I will go out there to-night, and build a camp right at the spot where old man Carter turns into the woods, and you will find me there when you come. How will that do?"

"That will be all right, and nobody need know that we were in your company. Can't you *guess* what old man Carter wants of us?"

"I have thought about it all the way down, and I can't for the life of me think. The best

way for you to do will be to go up there and find out."

The boys, who saw that nothing could be gained by questioning Walcott, turned away and started down the road toward home, and paid no further attention to the boy who had laid his plans to rob them. He watched them until they had disappeared from view, and then went back to his woodpile. He picked up the saw, hung it on its place in the woodshed, and then went into the house.

"Mighty clear of my sawing wood when I've got fifty dollars in my pocket," said he. "In less than a week I will be up at Chazy Lake, and all danger of pursuit will be over. It is lucky for me that I saw that money when Percival opened his pocket-book."

CHAPTER XVI.

HELD UP IN THE WOODS.

"YOU don't want to be seen in my company, don't you?" said Walcott, as he proceeded to sling on his game-bag and count the bullets he had left for his rifle. "Everybody will look at the stage-driver as he goes by, and when they see me, they'll know that I am going hunting with you, will they? I would look nice going hunting with you fellows, wouldn't I? I want somebody that can tell a deer when they see him. Good-by, old woman. I shall not be back for three or four days."

"Where be you going?" asked his mother, without lifting her eyes from the fire.

"I am going after a deer."

"Well, I do hope you'll get one. What are we going to do for meat when you go away? Your father isn't worth shucks about getting anything for the table."

"He has got to wake up now and do something. The bacon and corn meal is all gone, and I don't know what you will have to eat. I guess you and him will have to go to the poorhouse."

So saying, Walcott shut the door and started on his long trip to the woods. After a while he was overtaken by a farmer who was going his way, and although the man did not ask him to ride, he climbed into the rear of his bobs and seated himself on the straw.

"How fur you going?" asked the farmer, as he watched the movement with a frown on his face.

"Just up into the woods a little piece to see if I can get a deer," said Walcott. "We haven't got anything to eat up at our house, and I want to see if I can't get some meat."

"I guess you are that way most all the time," said the man. "Why don't you look around and get something to do? Your folks will all be living on the county the first thing you know."

"Would you hire me to do anything?" asked Walcott.

"No, because I hain't got nothing for you to do," said the farmer. "But it seems to me Smith could give you a job if he wanted to."

"Yes; and then he would search my pockets every night to see if I didn't take some of his lumber with me," said Walcott, with a sneer. "I have got enough of stealing."

This ended the conversation between Walcott and the farmer. The latter did not care to have too much to do with a boy of his reputation, and Walcott was glad of it, for it gave him time to settle back on the straw and think about what he was going to do with all that money that Percival had in his pocket. For he never once thought of backing out. He knew it would be easy enough to secure it if he could only get the boys away by themselves in the woods, and what he would do after that he did not care. But wouldn't old man Carter be mad when he found that he had used his name when he had expressly told him that he must not?

"But I will be a long ways from him when he finds it out," said Walcott, with a smile. "I will have a dozen miles the start of him,

and I believe he can't catch me in a fair race through the woods."

The longer Walcott thought of the ordeal through which he was to pass the more he yearned to have it over with. He got tired sitting there in his cramped position on the straw, for the farmer never once offered to give him a seat beside him, and by the time that he drew up at Newport he was ready to get out; but before he got there there was a little incident happened that started a new train of reflections in Walcott's mind. As he came by Bob's house he was on the look-out for Hector, and sure enough he discovered him running about as lively as ever, while Bob was sawing wood in the back yard.

"Now, supposing that he is out when Percival and Ben come past here to-morrow?" said Walcott to himself. "They will tell me of it sure, and then there will be the very mischief to pay. Well, I can tell them that I knocked him down, and I supposed he was dead. All I ask of them is to get them a mile or so in the woods, and then they can think what they please."

When Walcott got out of the sled he thanked the farmer for the ride he had given him, to which the man paid no sort of attention, and set out to find a place for his camp. About two miles above Newport he found the place where he had come out the last time he was up there, and a little further on he struck a thicket of evergreens which he thought would be a good place for him to pass the night. It did not take him long to build a fire and put up a lean-to, and he had his food all cooked for supper; so in an hour's time his work was all done, and he lay down upon his bed and gave himself up to thinking what he was going to do with all that money. While thus employed he fell asleep, and it was broad daylight when he awoke.

"Thank goodness, I am nearer to having that money than I was last night," said he, as he raked the ashes together and prepared to start a fire. "I'll eat a good hearty breakfast, and then I won't touch any more until I get those funds safe in my hands."

It was a long time to wait until the boys came up, for the stage, if it traveled as slowly

as it usually did, would not reach Newport until two o'clock. He knew that they would not stay long in the village, for there was nobody they cared to see, and it would be three before they reached his camp; but when Walcott had finished his breakfast he took a seat on a log beside the road, firmly resolved that he was going to stay there until his victims had time to appear. He must have grown tired of sitting there, but presently, after a long waiting, Percival and Ben came in sight.

"Now for it," said Walcott; and he straightway began to tremble as though he was seized with a sudden attack of the ague. "I shake now worse than I did when I heard the door of that lockup close upon me for thirty days. I must get over this, for if I tremble when I ask them for that money they will know that I am as badly frightened as they are. Good-morning, boys. Where are you going, if I may ask the question?"

"You are a pretty fellow, you are," said Percival, in disgust.

"Why, what's the matter?" said Walcott, trying to look surprised.

"I thought you said you had killed that hound of Bob Carter's," answered Percival.

"And so I did," said Walcott earnestly. "I knocked him over as plain as I can see you, and he never got up."

"Where did you hit him?"

"Right in the breast—right where his heart was."

"Well, you missed his heart by a long ways; I can tell you that."

"Why, did you see him?"

"See him? Of course I did. Bob got into the sleigh and rode up with us as far as Newport, and there was that dog of his running along as lively as ever. He did not act as though he had been hurt at all."

"Did Bob say anything about the whack he gave me over the head?"

"Not a word. He did not mention your name at all. Walcott, I don't believe you shot at that dog."

"I wish I could have somebody here to prove it," said Walcott, looking down at the ground. "You see I did it when I thought there was no one around. Bob made the best

fight he knew how, but he couldn't get away with me."

"Now I want you to give me the money I gave you," said Percival, "and that is a word with a bark on it. You got ten dollars out of me for doing nothing."

"If I had the money here I would give it; but I have left it all at home. I was afraid I would lose it if I carried it around in my pocket, and so I left it where it would be safe."

"Well, we will stop at your house and get it. Have you been out to old man Carter's camp this morning?"

"No; I have been here since last night. Now if you are all ready we'll go on. But it beats me about that dog."

"I can tell you just how you worked that," said Ben, who was fully as angry as his brother was. "You came up here to shoot him, and when you found how big a man Bob Carter was you didn't dare attempt it. If we had examined your rifle we would have found the same bullet in it that you loaded it with when you left home."

"Then what made Bob give me this whack on the head?"

"Bob didn't hit you at all," said Percival. "Now let us go on and see what old man Carter has to say to us. I don't believe you can help us in what we have to do."

"Why can't I?"

"Because you are afraid. We supposed you would knock that dog over, no matter who was around; but when you saw Bob, you didn't want to try it. You are skeery of Bob."

Walcott made no reply, although it was plain enough that he was as mad as he could hold. The boys had brought their toboggan along with them, loaded with provisions to last them for three or four days, and they took hold of it and started on, leaving Walcott to follow behind. When they had gone a mile or more into the woods and there was nobody in sight, Walcott began to think it was about time for him to act.

"Now, boys, I guess you have gone far enough until I get through with a little business I have to attend to," said he; and when Percival and Ben turned around to see what

he meant, they found him with his rifle cocked and all ready to draw it to his face.

"What business have you got to attend to, and what do you mean by cocking that gun?" asked Percival, and his pale face showed that he was frightened.

"Take out your pocket-books, both of you, and throw them down on the snow," said Walcott in a trembling voice. "But first put them guns down."

"Do you intend to rob us?" said Ben.

"Put them guns down the first thing you do," said Walcott. "Stand them up against that tree out of the way. If I am afraid of Bob Carter I ain't afraid of you. That's right," he continued, as the boys, seeing from Walcott's face that he was inclined to shoot, unslung their guns from their backs and placed them against a tree close by. "Now when night comes you can come back here and get them. I don't want them. Take out your pocket-books and throw them on the ground."

"There's mine," said Ben spitefully. "It is much good I hope it will do you. There are just two dollars in it."

HIGHWAY ROBBERY.

UNIV. OF MICH.

"And there is mine," said Percival, taking out his own wallet. "You will find just four dollars."

"You can't shut up my eyes with such stories as them," said Walcott with a laugh. "I saw the inside of your pocket-book twice, and I know there is more than that in it. Now take up your toboggan and go on with it, and don't you look back. If you do, you'll hear bullets whistle."

The boys did not say anything more but went along the trail toward old man Carter's camp, dragging their toboggan with them. And they did not stop to look back either, for a boy who had been in the penitentiary was a bad fellow to have about.

"There, now," said Walcott, as he watched the boys out of sight and then hurriedly picked up the wallets and placed them in his own pocket. "I've done it, and now I am a rich man. I must get out of the way of old man Carter the first thing I do."

Walcott did not wait to see which way he was going, but struck off at once through the woods at his best pace. He ran until he was

nearly exhausted, and then he came to a little stream on whose banks he sat down to recover his breath and to see how much he had made by his highway robbery.

"According to those fellows I have made just six dollars," said he, laying his rifle on the ground beside him and straightening out his leg so that he could easily pull the pocket-books out. "That added to the seven dollars I have got in my pocket—I had to spend some for ammunition and for the bacon and crackers I bought to see me through to Chazy Lake—I'll have just—let me see. Six and seven are thirteen. Whoop! That won't be enough to get me a suit of clothes."

With trembling hands Walcott unfolded Percival's pocket-book, and speedily brought the bills to light. He wanted to see that pocket-book first, because he believed that he should find more money in it than Percival had told him of; but all he could find were four one-dollar bills. He looked the wallet all through, but, although it contained a good many trinkets that boys of his age are prone to collect, he could not find any more money.

Then Ben's pocket-book came in for examination; but a two-dollar bill was all he could find. He counted all his money, and found that he had just thirteen dollars. For that amount he had laid himself liable to be shut up in States prison for a long term of years.

"W-h-o-o-p!" shouted Walcott again, springing from the ground and walking up and down the banks of the stream as though he were going mad. "Here's me going to the lockup, and all I have got to show for it is this little wad of money. Now I must get across this stream some way, and I am bound to get wet, because I haven't got any axe to cut a tree down with. I'll bet that old man Carter doesn't catch me, anyway. Plague take such luck."

Filled with the most gloomy thoughts Walcott took his way down the brook, but he could not find a tree that had fallen just right to suit him; and finally he became impatient and started out to swim it, for he did not know how long it would be before old man Carter would be upon his trail. The water was over his head; it was cold, too, and by

the time a few strokes had brought him to the opposite bank he was as wet as a drowned rat. He shivered fearfully, but he set out on a run again, and by the time he had gone three miles he came to a wide gully which he thought would be a good place for a camp. He could build a fire down there and dry himself, and his pursuers, if he had any, would not see the smoke until they were close onto him. We ought to say that Walcott had taken some pains to save his ammunition and his matches when he crossed that stream. He had held them above his head with one hand while he swam with the other; so his materials for killing game and kindling a fire were still left to him. He blundered down the bank of the gully, not caring whether he fell or not, and in a few minutes had a fire started and his overcoat and provisions were drying in front of it.

And where were the victims of his greed all this time? They were hurrying through the woods as fast as they could, intent on reaching old man Carter's camp. If we should say that they were surprised at Walcott's

actions we would not half hit the mark. They were too amazed to talk until they were safely out of his reach, and then Percival stepped behind a tree and looked back toward the place where they had been robbed. Walcott was not in sight.

"Don't this beat you?" said Ben, stepping behind another tree.

"I never thought that of Walcott," said Percival, drawing a long breath to know that the danger was past. "What is he going to do with that money?"

"He can't do anything with it. Where is he going to get his provisions? I tell you if we catch him he will go to jail for more than thirty days."

"Well, he has gone for somewhere, and the best thing we can do is to go on and see Mr. Carter. I don't believe he sent for us to come up here at all. That fellow has fooled us completely."

"Let's go back and get our guns," said Ben. "He is out of sight by this time."

Percival, who had taken hold of the rope of the toboggan, at once dropped it and

started back for the tree. He kept a bright lookout for Walcott all the way, but he was half a mile away in the woods and doing his best to reach Chazy Lake. They secured their guns, and then Percival, to show how brave he was, drew the weapon to his face and took aim at a knot on a tree close by.

"Why didn't you do that when Walcott cocked his rifle on us?" said Ben. "He wouldn't have got away with our money as easily as he did."

"I did not dare do it. He meant to shoot; I could see it in his eye. And, furthermore, he had the drop on me."

The boys slung their guns on their backs —they were provided with straps so that they could carry them in this way whenever they had occasion to use both hands—picked up their toboggan on the way and made all haste to find old man Carter. A rapid walk of two miles brought them within sight of his lean-to. They knew it was Carter's, for there was a dim smoke rising from the back of it from a fire, which, when they got up to it, they found had nearly gone out. The man of whom they

were in search had evidently slept there the night before, for there was the basket containing his provisions and the blanket which he had used to cover himself, under the lean-to, just as he had left it.

"I wish he was here, for I want to know what he thinks about that Walcott," said Ben.

"I want more to find out whether or not he sent for us," said Percival. "He has probably gone out to attend to his traps. You build up the fire and I will unpack the toboggan. Maybe he will be better-natured and be more willing to talk to us if he finds that he has something to eat."

"I wish I had that money back," said Ben, for he could not get his loss out of his mind. "Father won't give me any more until the first of next month."

"Yes, he will. But, Ben, remember that we don't want to say anything to him about shooting that dog of Bob Carter's. We want to make him believe, if we can, that we ran onto Walcott here in the woods, and he robbed us."

The boys' tongues were fully as busy as

their hands, and they could not know what Walcott had meant by being so friendly to them when they first met, and then turning round and relieving them of their pocket-books. While they were discussing the situation a crunching of the snow came faintly to their ears from some part of the woods, and presently old man Carter came in sight. He had seen the smoke arise from the fire, and he believed that Walcott was there ahead of him; but the fierce frown on his face gave way to a pleasanter expression when he saw who the newcomers were, and, furthermore, that they had dinner under way.

"Well, boys, you thought you would try it again, did you?" said he as he came up.

"Oh, Mr. Carter," exclaimed Ben, "what do you think that Walcott has done?"

"I don't know," said the man, leaning his rifle up in one corner of his shanty. "Has he been robbing some more henroosts?"

"Did you send word by him that you wanted to see us?" said Percival.

"Never," said old man Carter.

"Well, he told us that you did, and when

he got us out here in the woods he took our pocket-books away from us."

Old man Carter threw himself upon his bed and seemed utterly surprised at what the boys had told him. He looked first at one and then at the other before he fairly got it through his head. Then some conversation he had had with Walcott came into his mind. Finally he asked Percival to tell him the full particulars, and in order that he could comprehend it fully he filled up his pipe and lighted it with a brand from the fire. In two minutes more he knew all about it, and then he began to get angry.

"He did talk about robbing you when he was up here the other day, and when he wanted to know if I would send for you I told him very plain that he could not," said Mr. Carter. "I told him that I wasn't going to get in jail for the sake of accommodating him. And he told you that I wanted to see you? I never told him that in the world."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that if he wanted to get those pocket-books he could get them by himself. I

wouldn't have a thing to do with it. But, my gracious! I didn't think he would try it. That Walcott is an awful desperate boy."

"Well, are Ben and I to stand by and lose our pocket-books?" asked Percival, who knew that for every minute they talked Walcott was putting in the time by getting farther away from them. "There are constables in this town."

"Just wait until I get my dinner, which I see you have ready to serve up, and then I will make up my mind what I ought to do," said old man Carter, now getting up off his bed. "We don't want to take any constables to help catch that fellow."

"But he has a rifle," suggested Ben.

"I don't care if he has half a dozen rifles. Let me once get a sight of that boy and I'll have him in the lockup before the sun sets."

"Will you go after him?" inquired Ben.

"That's what I allow to do as soon as I get something to eat."

"But you can't follow him in the dark."

"I know pretty nearly where he has gone," said Mr. Carter, helping himself to a generous

slice of bacon and crackers, "and he hasn't more than two hours the start of me. I can catch him."

"Well, you will want something to eat on the way, and so we had better dish you up some bacon for you to put in your game-bag," said Percival; and suiting the action to the word, he proceeded to cut off some more of the meat. "He walks pretty rapidly, and you may be gone three or four days."

Old man Carter made no reply, for he was thinking about something else that had come into his mind all on a sudden. Ever since the disaster at the mill he had been oppressed by gloomy feelings that he would not have charge of the new dams when they were built. That was very harrowing to him, for where would he go to find work that would bring him in sixty dollars a month? It was very easy work, too, and now when it was too late Mr. Carter wished that he had not been so careful of himself. No matter how hard it rained the next time, he would go out in it. Now it occurred to him that if he followed up Walcott and captured the pocket-books which

he had stolen from the boys, without any help from the constables, that that act on his part would go far toward making amends for the carelessness of which he had been guilty. Mr. Morton would feel grateful to him for it, and perhaps he could get him appointed to look-out for the dams, as heretofore.

"I'm a-going to try it," said old man Carter to himself. "But, first, I must talk to the boys about it. If they will put in a good word for me to their father I'll catch that fellow; but, if they won't do it, the matter can drop where it is. They had no business to let Walcott take their pocket-books away. And they had two guns, too."

When old man Carter got through with his dinner he settled back on his bed and leisurely pulled out his pipe. He didn't act as though he was in any haste to catch the thief.

CHAPTER XVII.

BOB ON THE TRAIL.

PERCIVAL and Ben thought that at the moment old man Carter had finished his eating he would jump up and lose no time in getting upon the trail of Walcott; but his actions seemed to indicate that he was in no hurry. He filled his pipe very slowly, lighted it with a coal from the fire, and then settled back at his ease.

"Now, see here, Mr. Carter," said Percival, who was plainly disappointed by the old man's conduct, "if you are going to catch Walcott you had better be about it. You don't know how fast that fellow travels when he is in a hurry."

"I know all about it, and I can catch him before he has gone five miles," said Mr. Carter. "But there is one thing I want to talk to you boys about before I start after

him. Your old man is down on me because I let the dams break."

"Why, no, he isn't," exclaimed Percival. "He is glad of it. I heard him say so."

"That is news to me," said Mr. Carter, in surprise. "Don't he know how those men came to my house with hickory switches?"

"Yes, and he said that if you had only stayed there and knocked some of them over they would have let you alone. That's what I think, too."

"Well, you see I wasn't fool enough to engage in any doings like that," said old man Carter, with a laugh. "There's enough of them down on me now, and if I had killed some of them I would be gone to the lock-up, sure. But what I want to ask you about is this: Do you suppose if I catch Walcott, and make him give up your money, your father will forget all about them dams breaking and give me the same position I had before?"

"Of course he will," exclaimed Ben. "You were not to blame for the dams breaking."

"I think that if it hadn't rained so hard I might have gone there before I did," answered old man Carter. "But I couldn't help it raining."

"He will give you the same position you had before, and don't you worry over it," said Percival. "I guess my father has as much influence in Albany as old Smith or Pratt."

"If you think it is all right I'll go and catch Walcott. But you will say a good word for me, won't you?"

"Why, certainly. When the new dams are built you will be up in that little shanty of yours as big as life."

"Then I'll go," said the old man, getting up from his bed of boughs and taking his rifle. "Where's that bacon and crackers you had ready for me? Now I shall be gone for three days, probably, and you had better not stay here and wait for me."

"Oh, yes we will," said Ben. "We are going to be with you when you take that fellow into the village."

Mr. Carter slung on his game-bag, which was filled as full of provisions as he thought

he would need, said good-by, and posted off into the bushes; but he hadn't gone far before Percival cried out—

"Why, man, you are a long ways off his trail. You will never catch him if you are going that way."

"I told you that I know pretty nearly where he was going, didn't I? He is taking a roundabout way while I am going across-lots."

The boys stood in front of the lean-to and watched old man Carter as long as he remained in sight, and then seated themselves on the beds and looked at each other. If Mr. Carter knew where he was going, he was certainly taking a wrong course to head him off.

"Walcott has gone up," said Ben in tones of intense disgust. "He will never get him that way in the world."

"I think myself that we made a mistake in not going to the village after help," said Percival. "But then he knows the woods."

It was now nearly dark, and the boys could not imagine how his pursuer was going to fol-

low him after the shades of night came down and all the woods was enveloped in darkness. He did not have any footprints in the snow to guide him, and they were as certain as they wanted to be that old man Carter would come back empty-handed. And then there was the rifle which Walcott carried on his shoulder. If he looked as savage as he did when he was taking the pocket-books away from them, they did not think that Mr. Carter would try to arrest him.

"That fellow meant shoot; I could see that with half an eye," said Ben, who was going over in imagination all that had passed between Walcott and themselves. "I am glad I am not going after him."

When bedtime came the boys stretched themselves out on their beds of boughs under the shelter of their own lean-to, and finally fell asleep. When they awoke it was daylight, and Percival's first question was where the thief, who was trying so hard to save six dollars, and his pursuer, had passed the night.

"I wasn't thinking about that," said Ben, who seemed to have grown downhearted

since he went to bed. "They knew just what they had before them when they undertook the job. But there is another thing that has been weighing on my mind. Suppose that old man Carter succeeds in arresting Walcott and takes him before a justice of the peace, he'll have to stand an examination, won't he?"

"Of course he will," said Percival.

"Well, during the progress of that examination he will have to tell why he came up here."

"Ben, what are you trying to get at?" asked Percival, his own countenance showing that he was a little alarmed.

"Won't he come to the shooting of Bob Carter's dog?" said Ben.

"That's so. I did not think of that."

"That's what's been bothering me all night. You know that you did not want Bob to suspect that you had a hand in it. Bob has got lots of friends in the village, and if we get them all down on us we shall have to go into the woods, too."

Percival did not know what reply to make. He got up, washed his face in the snow, and

piled some more wood on the fire. After he had the blaze fairly started he sat down on old man Carter's bed under his lean-to and said—

"I don't care if it does all come out. Bob's dog had no business to bite me. Besides, we have Mr. Carter for evidence. He can swear I was not doing a thing to the hound."

"But that would not be true."

"And another thing," continued Percival; "if he gets to saying too much, I can prove by you that he told me to whip the dog. You will back me up that far, won't you?"

"Of course, for it is nothing but the truth. Old man Carter did tell you to whip the dog, for I heard him. I tell you, Perce, I ain't a-going to twist my evidence around so as to help anybody. These lawyers are mighty sharp, and the first thing you know they will pick some flaws in your testimony and send you off to jail for perjury. I was reading a case about that in the paper the other day."

While Ben was talking he was busy dressing—that is, washing his hands and face in the snow and brushing his hair without the aid of a looking-glass—and now he was ready

to help with the breakfast. This done, they had nothing to do but sit around under the lean-to and wait for old man Carter. They did not think of going out to hunt for any game, for they did not feel like it. They wanted to be there when Walcott was marched into camp, for they desired to have a good view of him and see how he felt over his efforts to steal the money. But all that day passed and night came, and still no signs of old man Carter. The boys began to think that something had happened to him. They did not suppose that a boy like Walcott would allow himself to be arrested by a single man while he had a gun on his shoulder and knew how to use it. Although each easily saw what was passing in the mind of the other, they said nothing about it. When bedtime came they sought their couches, but woke up in the morning and found no traces of Walcott and his pursuer.

"I tell you, Ben, we can't live this way much longer," said Percival. "Our provisions are nearly gone."

"And no signs of Mr. Carter yet," chimed

in Ben. "Do you know it kinder runs in my mind that he didn't arrest Walcott as easily as he thought he was going to."

"Or else that he didn't find his trail," said Percival. "I told him he was going off the wrong way, but he seemed to know all about it. We will stay here to-night, and if he doesn't come here by to-morrow morning we must pull out and start for home."

"Couldn't we eat some of Mr. Carter's provisions?" inquired Ben.

"You may, but I don't want to touch them," answered Percival, wrinkling up his nose as if to imply that the grub was not as neat as some he had seen. "I guess we will leave that for old man Carter and his prisoner—if he gets him."

This day was much like the preceding one, only a deer did come out of the bushes, stood for a moment or two and gazed in surprise at the boys, and before either of them could catch up a gun he had disappeared as quickly as he had come out. Of course they uttered ejaculations, but then it was too late. If they had killed it, it would have been the first one

they had ever shot at, and it would have been something worth showing. Dinner and supper were the only things the boys had to attend to, and when night came they agreed that if old man Carter did not show up in the morning they would have to start for home.

"There is another thing that has been running in my mind," said Ben, who looked far enough into the future to see how things were coming out. "Shall we tell the storekeeper about our being robbed? Something may have happened to old man Carter, and it might be well for somebody to go into the woods and hunt him up."

"Perhaps that would be a good idea," said Percival, after thinking a moment. "If Walcott has shot that man we had better let it be known ourselves than to have it come out on us by-and-by. We will do that."

When morning came, and the last particle of their bacon and crackers had disappeared, the boys took hold of their empty toboggan and set out on their homeward journey. They kept a bright lookout as they walked along,

and finally came to the place where they had stood when Walcott first made a demand on them for their pocket-books. They could easily tell the spot, for their footprints were plain.

"He didn't get much out of me," said Ben, catching hold of the rope and starting toward the road. "Two dollars invested in provisions won't last him a week."

"He has made a good deal more out of me," said Percival, and whenever he spoke of it the look on his countenance showed that he was getting angry. "I paid him ten dollars for something which he did not do. He might just as well have stayed at home."

Two hours' steady walking brought them to the road, and in a short time they drew up before the grocery store. They stopped long enough to take their toboggan out of the way of any teams that might come up and then went in, Percival leading the way. To their surprise they found nobody but Mr. Roberts there. The weather was mild now, and all the hangers-on had gone into the woods to cut wood.

"Halloo, boys," said the storekeeper. "What have you got this time?"

"Not a thing," answered Percival. "But something has happened to us since we have been up there. You know Walcott, don't you?"

"I should say I did," replied the storekeeper, with a nod of his head. "I have been mighty careful of my henroosts since he came back. Heard anything from him lately?"

"Not for two or three days; and then he robbed Ben and me of six dollars."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Roberts. "He has been going down hill rapidly since he came back from the lockup. How did he get it?"

Percival then went on and told a history of the robbery, that is, as much as he cared to acquaint the man with, leaving out all reference to the shooting of Bob Carter's dog. He told him that Mr. Carter was encamped in the woods, that he wanted to see them, and by that means Walcott had got them away from everybody, and took their wallets at the muzzle of his rifle.

"But that isn't the worst of it," said Percival, in conclusion. "When Walcott went on his way to hide himself, we went on and told old man Carter of it. He said he could capture the fellow before he had gone five miles, but that was more than two days ago. He hasn't showed up yet."

"Good lands!" exclaimed the storekeeper. "Do you think that Walcott shot him?"

"We don't know what to think. All we know is that he did not come back."

"You are just getting home from the woods, ain't you? Then I'll tell you what I would do. Suppose you stop on the way down and tell Bob of it. He will go into the woods to hunt up his father."

"Wouldn't it do just as well if we should stop and tell Hugh Pratt about it?" inquired Percival, who did not think it would be well to trust himself within reach of Bob after the letter he had written him. "Hugh can go down and tell Bob of it."

"Well, I don't know as I blame you for not wanting to see Bob," said Mr. Roberts, taking a turn up and down the store. "You

are going to stay here to-night, so as to go home in the stage to-morrow?"

Percival said that was about the only way they could do, and Mr. Roberts suggested that they had better go down and see Hugh at once. It wasn't but a little ways for such fast walkers as they were, and the sooner Hugh heard of it, the sooner would they know what had become of old man Carter.

"I tell you, Perce, Mr. Carter has got a splendid way of getting out of the fuss he made by letting those dams break," said the grocery-keeper. "His neighbors are all down on him, and if he captures that man Walcott they won't say any more to him about the cattle that were drowned when the water came onto us."

Percival did not say that he hoped so, too, but went out after their toboggan, left it in one corner of the store, with their guns stood up behind it, and then set out for Hugh Pratt's house. It was only three miles to where he lived, and that was gone over almost before they knew it. Ben stopped outside, while Percival went in and rang the door-bell.

He thought that Hugh would answer the door, but in place of that his mother opened it. She greeted Percival cordially, to which the boy responded in some way, he hardly knew how, and asked for Hugh.

"Hugh went down to the village this morning with Paul," said Mrs. Pratt. "I hope it was not anything serious that you wanted to see him about."

Percival replied that it was too serious a matter to be dropped without something being done about it, and then he went on and told her as much of his story as he had told the storekeeper. Mrs. Pratt listened with a grave countenance, and when Percival concluded, said—

"That is bad. I don't know what Walcott will do if he is pushed, but he won't be taken with a fair prospect of going to jail. The best thing you can do is to go up and see Bob about it. I know he is at home."

Percival turned away and walked out to the gate where he had left Benjamin. He knew that this would be the decision which Mrs. Pratt had in view when she began talk-

ing to him, and he was very much worked up over it.

"I wish now that we had let fellows find it out for themselves," said Percival, in disgust. "I don't want to see Bob. He will throw the shooting of that dog up to me the first thing."

"Perhaps he won't say a word about it," said Ben. "He don't know that you hired Walcott to do that job for you. Let us go up and have it over."

Ben took his brother by the arm and led him up to the crossroads on which Bob lived, and when they got to the plank which crossed the ditch they found Bob engaged in splitting wood. Hector barked, and when his master looked up he was somewhat surprised to see Percival and Ben before him.

"Come here, Bob. I have something to tell you."

The boy's face did not look as though he was angry at all, and neither did Hector, who came up to the fence and wagged his tail as he looked up at the boys. If he remembered that Percival had started in to whip him without any provocation he did not indicate it. His

master, however, was suspicious. He looked closely at the boys, and up and down the fence to see if they had deposited their guns anywhere, but he saw nothing to prove that they had come there with any hostile object in view.

"Halloo," said he, as soon as he had satisfied himself on that point. "What's up?"

Percival began and told his story for a third time, and it drove the smile away from Bob's face and made him indignant indeed. When told about his father going off in pursuit of Walcott, with the assurance that he could catch him before he had gone five miles, Bob became impatient to hear the story all at once.

"Do you think that Walcott has taken advantage of father and shot him?" he asked. "I don't believe that is possible."

"Well, he has done something to him, or else he would have been back before this time," said Percival. "We thought we would stay up there in camp so as to see Walcott when he came back, but our provisions gave out and we had to come home."

"I am much obliged to you for telling this

to me," said Bob, and he reached over the fence and gave Percival his hand. "I will go there at once——"

"Why, you can't follow him in the dark," said Ben.

"The dark will not trouble me," said Bob. "I can easily find father's camp to-night, and when morning comes I can follow his footprints in the snow. If father has caught that fellow, or is so badly injured that he can't get out, I will be there to help him."

Bob turned about and went up the steps in two jumps, followed by Hector, and Percival and Ben went back to Newport.

"He didn't say a word about shooting his hound, did he?" said Percival gleefully. "I was afraid he would speak about it the first thing."

"No, but he was all ready for it," said Ben. "If we had had our guns, Hector wouldn't have been there at the fence."

"I do hope that between them both they will arrest that man Walcott. We'll show him that he can't practice highway robbery in such a town as this."

Bob was in a fever of excitement when he got into the house. His mother knew at once that he had heard some bad news, and waited patiently until he drew a chair to her side and told her all about it. He thought he ought to tell her rather than conceal it from her. He touched as lightly as he could upon certain portions of the story, but before he got through Mrs. Carter knew that her husband was in danger.

"I wish it had been somebody besides that Walcott," said she, trying hard to keep back the tears. "He knows almost as much about the woods as your father does."

"But for all that he can't shoot father," said Bob emphatically. "He will see him if he is a mile off. Now, mother, I must cook something to last me for three or four days. I shall have to take Hector along, so you will be all alone."

Mrs. Carter raised no objections to what Bob proposed to do, but sat there in her chair wondering what new trouble Mr. Carter had got into now. She could not rid her mind of the fact that Walcott was a dead shot, and,

having been in the lockup once, he did not want to go there again. It would be just like him to draw a bead on Mr. Carter, that is if he had any reason to suspect that the man was pursuing him, and give no thought to the probable consequences. He would get out of old man Carter's reach, and that was all he cared for. He did not think that every man who knew him would be on the lookout to arrest him for murder. Some such thoughts as these must have troubled Bob Carter, for his hands trembled so violently that he could scarcely cut the bacon.

"That's just what Walcott will do," said he to himself. "He hasn't got sense enough to know that by shooting father he will have everybody in the settlement down on him. I must get out there as soon as I can."

For a wonder his mother did not come near him while he was cooking the provisions that were to last him until Walcott was captured, for Bob was resolved that he would not come back without him, and in process of time he had them all done. Hector believed that something was in the wind, for he stuck close

to his master's side. His provisions being wrapped in brown paper and stowed away in his game-bag, and his single-barrel examined to make sure that it was all ready for action, Bob kissed his mother, being sure to tell her that she would see his father at home in a day or two, and went out with Hector at his heels. He was not nearly so sanguine as he pretended to be, and when he got out of sight of his mother he broke into a dog-trot, which he never slackened until he passed through Newport. Fortunately there was nobody on the street to ask him where he was going, and consequently he did not stop to answer any questions. It was dark long before he reached his father's old trail, but that did not trouble Bob. The snow was lighter than the surrounding forest, and with very little trouble he found the place where his father struck the road when he came out of the woods. Then he called Hector to his side.

"Here he is, old fellow," said he, running his palm along his father's footprints, then waving his hand toward the woods. "Hunt him up. Away you go, now."

It was little trouble for Hector to follow the trail. Whether or not he knew what object Bob had in view in showing him the footprints, he certainly acted as if he did. He never bayed or broke into a run, but kept steadily along in front of his master for three hours, until he came within sight of the lean-to. Of course Bob did not expect to find his father there. The fire had gone out, and Hector, having performed his part of the work, stretched himself out beside it to wait until Bob had leisure to set the blaze going. In an hour both master and hound were fast asleep, and the fire was burning steadily.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WALCOTT A PRISONER.

"NOW, old fellow, the hunt fairly begins," said Bob, as he awoke the next morning about daylight, got up from his blanket, and proceeded to pile some more fuel on the fire. "I don't expect to find father to-day, for, if he didn't go too far away, he would have been back here before this time. About to-morrow the fun will begin. How that Walcott does travel! He did not have so very long a start of father, and yet he has led him a whole day in the woods. I hope he has kept his rifle by his side, instead of drawing it to his face. That's what I am afraid of."

When Bob and his hound had eaten a good supply of the breakfast which had been cooked at home it was light enough for Hector to take up the trail. He followed it just as he had done the night before. He kept

along in advance of Bob until his master could distinguish the footprints himself. He found that his father took very long steps when he was in a hurry, for Bob, after trying in vain to step in his tracks, gave it up as a bad job. Finally Bob came to the gully in which the robber had made his camp, but there was nobody to be seen. He saw the place where Walcott had slept and then held across the little creek and up the opposite bank where the traveling became easier. Both men had now broke into a run—Bob knew it because their footprints were further apart—and the boy, feeling fresh after his night's rest, broke into a run, too. Hector was quite willing to increase his pace, but still he did not give tongue. Bob ran until he was almost exhausted, but still he could not see any signs of the men of whom he was in pursuit having stopped to eat their dinner, and he finally concluded that he would stop and take a short rest.

"I tell you those two fellows were going pretty lively," said Bob, addressing his hound as though the animal could comprehend every

word he said. "We don't want a fire, do we? We will sit here until we get our second wind, and then we will go on and see if we can overtake them before night. I hope they did not exchange shots during their meeting."

This thought had been uppermost in Bob's mind during the whole of that trip, and it was easy enough to see that it troubled him yet. He knew that his father was "quick on the trigger," but it would be easy for Walcott to ambush himself and shoot before old man Carter knew that he was anywhere around. That was what worried Bob, and it troubled him so much that he never stopped to "get his second wind," but jumped to his feet and started on again almost as soon as he had sat down. For two hours they tore along the trail, and at three o'clock the hound came upon something at which he smelled, and then backed off and set up a mournful howl. It was blood, and Bob gazed at it with eyes that seemed ready to start from their sockets. Walcott had proved himself a dangerous man. There was a crimson stain all along the trail, which proved another thing: old man Carter,

if he had been shot, was not the one to give up the object of his pursuit. He had gone on in spite of his wound, and whether or not he had succeeded in capturing him remained to be seen. A little further on Bob came to a spot where the snow was completely packed down, and there was more blood, as if to emphasize the fact that a severe struggle had taken place.

"It is just as I feared," said Bob, looking all around to see if he could discover either of the men. "They can't go far if they were hit as badly as that. Halloo, there!" he added, raising his voice so that it could have been heard a mile away.

The echoes awakened by his shout had scarcely ceased when the answer came in a voice that almost took Bob's breath away. It was his father's voice, and he called out the words as though there was nothing at all the matter with him.

"This way, Bobby," said he. "Come out into the evergreens, and you will find us both in camp, even if we are not sound."

Hector set up a bay and started off in the

direction in which the voice sounded, followed by Bob, who kept close at his heels. A few steps brought him within sight of his father, but what a sight he saw when he got there! Both men were wounded—his father through the leg, and Walcott, who sat close beside him, with his hands tied behind him, had been hit somewhere about the head. There was no fire, although the wood had been laid, but no one had touched a match to it. His father had cut his trousers, so that he could get at his wound, which was tied up with strips of his shirt, but when Bob saw the blood that had trickled through his bandages he turned upon Walcott as if he had half a mind to give him more than he had got already.

"I knew you would find me, Bobby, and so I was mighty easy in my own mind," said old man Carter, reaching out his palm to shake the boy by the hand. "But first light that fire, and then I will tell you all about it. I got the wood all ready, but I couldn't find any matches. Walcott hasn't got any, either."

"Why, father, how in the world did it happen?" said Bob, finding his tongue at last.

"You light the fire, and then I will tell you," said his father. "It is fearful cold for us to sit here without a fire. Yes, sir," he added, when he saw Bob kneeling beside the fire with a lighted match in his hand, "that fellow got the better of me as sure as the world. He must have heard me coming, for the first thing I knew, whiz! I got the bullet right plumb through the leg. But that didn't take all the fight out of me, I tell you. I fired, too, and then I went on and got him. I had something of a squabble in getting him down, but I got him down at last, and tied his hands with a cord I happened to have in my pocket."

This was about all there was to tell, and it occupied Bob's mind while he was taking the bandages off his father's leg and putting on new ones. When he saw the ugly gap that Walcott's bullet had made in the calf of his father's leg he made up his mind to one conclusion. His father could not walk all the way home with that leg. He must leave him there in the woods alone and go back after assistance. When he had attended to his

father he turned to Walcott to see if he could do anything for him. His face was covered with blood; and, taken altogether, he did not look like a man who had defied arrest by shooting his sole pursuer. He presented the appearance of one who was very much afraid of what he had done.

"Say, Bob," said he in a weak voice, "if you will only let me go I will never do it again."

"Ah, yes," said old man Carter in a much more cheery mood than one would have expected from one against whom he had had the deadly rifle pointed a short half hour before. "We can't let you go until we step down and see the justice of the peace about it. It is my opinion that you will get something for shooting me. And to think that that fellow should put himself in the way of being locked up for such a small sum of money as that," he concluded, pulling out the two pocket-books of which Walcott had robbed Percival and Ben Morton and handing them to Bob. "If you were going to steal money why didn't you steal lots of it? Just run your eye over the

bills in there and see if that is not a little amount for shooting me?"

"I thought I was going to get a bigger amount than that," said Walcott. "Now, seeing that it is so small, you had better let me go, hadn't you? I'll do anything I can for you. I'll give you my rifle."

"There's five dollars of that belongs to him," said Mr. Carter, when he saw Bob counting the bills. "And he was going to earn that by shooting Hector, here."

Bob looked at Walcott in surprise.

"He confessed everything to me before you came up," added old man Carter. "Now, Walcott, don't say nothing more about our letting you go, for it ain't to be thought of. The next thing is, how am I going to get home? I can't walk there, for my wound hurts me awful."

"It has probably become swelled since you made your camp, and I expect you will have to have help in order to get home," said Bob. "If you don't mind staying here alone I'll go after somebody."

"I wouldn't mind that at all if I had some-

thing to eat," said his father. "I've got just enough for one meal."

"I have not got much more than that but I will divide with you," said Bob, pulling his haversack around and drawing out the food that he had cooked before leaving the house. "But what shall we do with Walcott in the meantime?"

"Let me go with you," said Walcott. "I would rather be anywhere than here in the woods."

"Well, I don't see any objections to that; do you, Bob?" said Mr. Carter, after thinking the matter over. "You needn't think you are going to get away by going with Bob. Your hands are tied up, and they will be tied up when you get to the village."

"I don't think I am going to get away," said Walcott; although the truth of the matter was, that was just what he did think. If he could only induce Bob to loosen up on his hands a little before he went to sleep, he would be miles away by the time he woke up. He was certain that Bob could not do much toward recapturing him.

"No, I don't see any objection to it," said Bob. "He'll have to grow hungry before he gets there, and I can give him up to a constable, or to Mr. Roberts, who is one of the selectmen, and he will have to look out for him."

"Well, it's too late to do anything about it to-night," said Mr. Carter, "and so we will wait until morning. Walcott, I wish you had this hole in your leg that I have got. I reckon you'd sleep easy after it."

"And what would you think if you had this gap in my head that you gave me?" retorted Walcott. "If it had not been for that, which blinded me so, I'll bet you wouldn't have tied me so easy."

"Well, Walcott, you did give me a hard tussle, that's a fact," said Mr. Carter, laughing a little in spite of the pain of his wound. "But I want you to bear this thing in mind: Whenever you get out of jail, if you ever do, and think that I can't tie you, I'll meet you here in the woods to try it on."

Meanwhile Bob was not idle. As soon as he heard his father say that it was too late to

think of starting for Newport with Walcott, he went to work to gather a supply of firewood, and he worked until long after dark. He had no axe, so all he could do was to roam about through the woods and pick up any limbs he could find. He brought up enough to last his father for three or four days, for it would take him that long to go and bring help. They never thought of any supper. They had only two meals between them, and that must last them until Bob could procure more. As soon as it grew too dark for Bob to continue his labor he built up a roaring fire and took his seat by his father's side.

"Hadn't I better build up a lean-to for you?" said he, as he looked about the camp to see what else could be done. "It may come on to rain."

"I'll risk that," said old man Carter. "It'll snow, if it does anything. I tell you, Bob, you ought to have been here to see Walcott drop when I pulled on him," continued Mr. Carter, holding his wounded leg and laughing heartily.

"I guess you would a-dropped too," said

Walcott, who could not bear to have anybody make fun of him if he was a prisoner.

"You see I fired at the same time that Walcott did," added his father, "but he got just a second ahead of me. I pulled on his head and he drew on my legs. I felt a pain down there, but I didn't know what it was; and if you had seen that old cap of his jump up when I hit him, you would have laughed in spite of yourself. It's very lucky that he got the first shot, for if he hadn't you would have needed help to carry him to Newport, too."

"Did you hit him very bad?" said Bob, who shuddered when he heard his father talk so glibly of shooting Walcott so dead that it would need a stretcher to carry him out of the woods.

"Not very bad," said old man Carter. "He spoiled my aim. I just cut a little crease in his scalp, but it didn't take all the fight out of him. He struggled so hard that I thought I would have to give up on account of my wounded leg. Now I guess I'll have to smoke a pipe."

"Well, when you get through, lie down and see if you can sleep. I'll watch Walcott all night."

"Oh, I can't," said Mr. Carter. "This leg hurts me so that slumber is something I can't think of. You go to sleep and I'll have you up at the first peep of day."

It was long after midnight before Bob lay down on the boughs to court slumber, and all this time he heard his father, whose tongue was very active, relate stories of his life in the woods until he fell asleep in spite of himself. When he awoke there was his father sitting just as he had been the night before, with his pipe tightly clasped between his teeth and hugging his wounded leg.

"I was just going to call you," said he. "It's getting daylight, and you can easily see the trail you made in coming up here."

Old man Carter was impatient to see Bob off, and he lost no time in getting ready. All he had to do was to sling on his accoutrements and game-bag and arouse Walcott, who had sunk into a profound slumber. The latter sat up and in a feeble voice implored Bob to

loosen up on his bands a bit. He had been tied so long that they were getting painful.

"That's all right," said old man Carter. "The only way in which you can get your arms free is to go down to Newport with Bob and let the constable there loosen them up. Bob, don't you slack away on those lashings one bit. If you do, you won't get Walcott down there, and I have reasons of my own for wanting him to go through safe."

Bob promised compliance, helped Walcott to his feet, and looked about the camp to see if there was anything he had forgotten to attend to. Then he bid his father good-by, with the assurance that he would be back with help at the earliest possible moment, and motioned to Walcott to take the trail. In a few minutes he was out of sight.

"There," said old man Carter, with something like a sigh of relief. "That much is done, and I stand a chance of getting my old position on the new dams whenever they are built. My only trouble now is that I am afraid that Smith and Pratt will go against me. If they do I am up stump; but then

Smith is a good-natured fellow, and perhaps Paul, when he hears the story, will say a word in my favor."

Mr. Carter filled his pipe again and settled back for a smoke, and during the three days that Bob was absent he had these thoughts for company. He very soon had eaten up his solitary meal, and then he began to see how it felt to go hungry; but then he had an object in view, and the thought of that kept him up.

Meanwhile Bob and Hector were going on toward Newport, and before he had left his father far behind he began to see that Walcott was a hindrance to him. He kept going slower every step of the way until finally he scarcely moved. Bob kept urging him to go faster, but he protested that he couldn't do it. The cord with which his arms were bound was so tight that the pain was almost intolerable.

"If you'll just loosen up on them a little I'll get along fast enough," said he. "I wouldn't keep you tied up in this way."

"You ought to have thought of that before you got those pocket-books," said Bob.

"Well, can't you let up on these a little bit?"

"No, I cannot. You heard what father said to me. Now, I want you to move those feet tolerably faster. If you don't, I will tell you something else."

"What will you do?"

"I will tie you up here in the woods and leave you until I can go after help," said Bob.

"Haw, haw!" laughed Walcott, who evidently forgot the pain that the cord he was tied with occasioned him. "Have you got a rope in your pocket? You leave me tied up here, and I would be free before you had gone one hundred yards."

Bob drew his game-bag in front of him, and, after a little search, pulled forth a small bundle of strong string, which he showed to Walcott; whereupon that worthy opened his eyes and thought he had better move on faster than he had been doing. It was not so much fun to be tied to a tree and left there alone for three days, for the nights were chilling cold; and then there were the wolves,

which frequently awoke the echoes of the woods, far and near. If he stayed with Bob he could have a camp-fire to warm himself at night, and a bed of boughs to sleep on, and that was better than being fastened up hard and fast. That was the way Walcott looked at it, and from that time forward Bob had no trouble with him.

Bob had no idea how far he had traveled on a run on the day when he was following his father, but it was almost dark when he reached the gully in which Walcott had made his first camp. Here he decided to remain for the night. He examined Walcott's bonds to be certain that they were all right, and then gathered up some fuel, with which to start a fire. This done, he thought that he and Walcott would see what there was left in his game-bag. Of course it looked very small to be divided among three of them, for Hector came in for his share, but he thought it would last him until the next day. By a little after dark, if they kept up a fast walking all the way, they would arrive in Newport, and then they could get all they wanted to eat.

"I guess you'll have to untie my hands now," said Walcott, as he saw Bob bring out his food. "I can't eat with my hands tied."

"Oh, yes; I'll show you that you can," said Bob. "I'll have to feed you as I would a sick person. I'll make a sandwich of this bacon and bread, and as fast as you eat up one mouthful I'll give you another."

"I don't see what makes you so cross to me, Bob," said Walcott, who was plainly disappointed that his hands were left bound behind his back. "I haven't done anything to you."

"Haven't you, though?" said Bob, frowning fiercely upon his prisoner. "Don't you call it doing something to me when you shot my father so that he will be laid up for two months? I would rather you would have shot me."

"Why, Bob," said Walcott, pausing in his conversation long enough to bite off a piece of the sandwich, "your father don't do anything to support your mother. When he was making a whole raft of money down there watching the dams——"

"Take another bite of this bacon and bread and let it stop your mouth," said Bob. "What my father did with his money is no concern of yours, and I don't want to discuss his acts with such a fellow as you are. Now, if you have got enough lay down on your bed of boughs and go to sleep."

Walcott saw that all efforts to get into conversation with Bob were not likely to prove successful, and he gave it up as a bad job. From that time on he made no attempt to talk with him, but submitted to his capture with as good a grace as possible, and allowed Bob to do what he pleased with him. He laid down and in a few minutes was fast asleep, and Bob sat by him, with his rifle resting across his knees, until broad daylight. As soon as it was light enough to see how to travel he awoke his prisoner, and they set out for Newport, Walcott leading the way. It was dark long before they got there, and in an hour after striking the road they drew up in front of Mr. Roberts' grocery store. There was one light burning, and that made Bob know that the proprietor was just getting ready to shut up.

"I tell you, Bob, I don't like to go in there," said Walcott. "Can't you get him to come out here?"

"What good will that do?" inquired Bob. "The men in here are bound to find it out, and they will come out here. Come on. You've got to face the music."

Bob afterward declared that he never saw a body of men—there were a dozen of them in all—so completely surprised as those men were when he opened the door and ushered Walcott into the grocery store. For a moment they did not say anything. Walcott's face was all covered with blood (remember that Bob hadn't any warm water to wash it off), his hands were tied behind him, and he was a prisoner sure enough. Mr. Roberts was the first man to recover the use of his tongue.

"Well, sir, you got him, didn't you?" said he, getting up from his chair and coming forward. "You hit him in the head, didn't you?"

"Father did that," said Bob, hauling up a chair and sitting down in it, for he was tired. "I overtook him in a camp about

thirty miles back in the woods, and they were both shot."

With this introduction Bob went on with his story, beginning with the time when Walcott had robbed Percival and Ben, and wound up with the struggle in front of the camp and the finding of his father and Walcott back in the bushes. Fortunately, there were two men present who, as soon as they had got over their surprise, got up and attended to Walcott. One was the constable and the other was the doctor. The former untied his hands, and the other pulled off his cap and examined his wound.

"Where is your father now?" inquired Mr. Roberts.

"He is in his camp, and he is so badly hurt that he can't get home without help," said Bob. "I want to see if I can get men enough to go out there and bring him in."

Of course he could, and they would be ready to start the first thing in the morning. It was too late to do anything that night. They would have a stretcher ready if Bob would be there at daylight and show them the way.

"I will be here," said Bob. "Now, Mr. Haskins," he added, turning to the constable and pulling out the pocket-books of which Walcott had robbed Percival and Ben Morton, "there is the amount of money that this fellow bartered away his liberty for. Five dollars of it belongs to him. He got it by agreeing to shoot Hector."

This was all that was needed to set the men to boiling over with rage against Walcott. Shoot Hector? The hound had never done anything in his life to deserve killing except to bite Percival Morton, and he would not have done that if the boy had let him alone. Many of the men muttered something against Walcott, in the midst of which Bob started for home.

"I knew those men would not think kindly of him for that," said he, striking into a dog-trot. "If Walcott has anything against me I can stand it, but he can't molest Hector."

It was all dark when Bob passed Hugh Pratt's house, and consequently he did not stop to ask if he had come home. It was all dark at his own house, too, but he knew that

a tap on the door would bring his mother out of bed. Before he struck the plank that led across the ditch he began to whistle. If his mother was awake—and he did not believe she would go to sleep while her husband was in danger—she would certainly hear him. He made plenty of noise in going up the steps, and then he ceased whistling and rapped at the door.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

"I HEARD you whistling," exclaimed his mother, as she opened the door almost as soon as his knuckles had touched it, "and I knew, from that, your father was all right."

"Yes, he is all right," said Bob, while Hector walked into the house and took possession of his accustomed rug behind the sitting-room stove. "I found him in camp at a long distance from here, and he had Walcott bound, with his hands tied behind him. I had the pocket-books, too, and gave them up to Mr. Haskins."

"What was the reason your father didn't come in with you?" asked his mother.

"Walcott was shot," added Bob, who did not know how to go to work to tell his mother that his father was shot, too.

"Your father didn't kill him?" stammered Mrs. Carter.

"Oh, no. You see father fired at the same time Walcott did, and he was shot through the leg——"

"Oh, Bob; you told me that your father was all right."

"And so he is," insisted Bob. "He was shot through the leg, but he went on and made a prisoner of Walcott. I brought him into town and gave him up into Mr. Haskins' keeping. In the morning I am going to get a stretcher and go out and bring father in."

Mrs. Carter left Bob and went and sat down in her big chair and covered her face with her hands. There must be something back of this, or Bob would not have employed a stretcher to bring him in. Bob stood his single-barrel up in one corner, lighted a lamp and came and sat down beside his mother.

"Now, mother, there is no need of your taking on like this," said he. "Father is all right, and if you could have heard him talk as I did the night I spent in his camp you would say the same. He seems to feel proud of catching that man after he had been shot. He will be at home day after to-morrow, and

you can be here to attend to him. Think how much better that will be than if he was in the woods."

It was by such arguments as these that Bob finally got his mother to look on the bright side of things, and she at last took her face out of her hands. She asked Bob innumerable questions about "the fight," for she could not think of anything else to call it, and Bob talked until he began to grow hungry. Then he and Hector adjourned to the kitchen, and there was not anything left of the food that Mrs. Carter had cooked when they got done.

"Now I believe I will go to sleep," said Bob. "I did not close my eyes in slumber all last night. I believe I will lie down on the lounge, for if I go to bed I may oversleep myself."

This programme was duly carried out, and in ten minutes more Bob was in the land of dreams. But he had a way of arousing himself whenever he felt like it. When four o'clock came he was up and ready for business. The first thing he did was to close his mother's bedroom door carefully, and his

next to go into the kitchen and start the fire. By the time his mother was fairly awake he had plenty of provisions cooked for her, besides his game-bag, which he had filled with food for his father. Hector took his stand beside his master while he was eating his breakfast, and, receiving a bit now and then, finally announced that he was ready for anything Bob had to propose.

"Now I am all ready to start out again, and I promise that you shall see father in this house to-morrow night," said Bob, kissing his mother. "The only thing I am afraid of is that he will be awful hungry. You rest easy until I come back."

Bob went off with his game-bag under his arm—he purposely left his single-barrel at home—and broke into his old-fashioned dog-trot, which he never slackened until he came within sight of Mr. Roberts' grocery store. To his surprise he found at least a dozen men there, all with baskets on their arms, who were eager to go in search of old man Carter. Bob looked closely at them and found that there was not a man in the party who had not

come to his house on that memorable night with hickory switches in their hands. But there was not a word said about whipping Mr. Carter this time. They were anxious to see the man who could make a prisoner of Walcott after he had been shot. Among them were the constable and the doctor. The latter didn't have much to do in the way of fixing up men who had been shot, and he thought if he could go out to old man Carter's camp and do up his leg for him, why, he would be just so much ahead.

"I tell you, Bob, it is just as well that that mob didn't find your father at home when they went there with hickory switches," whispered the doctor as he came up. "There would have been some of them dead now, sure."

"They haven't any intention of whipping father this time, have they?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no. You will see them shake hands with him as if there was nothing between them. I am going along, to see if I can do anything for him. He has been shot some time now, and his wound will want attending to."

"Now, Bob, I guess we are all ready," said Jed Brooks, who made one of the party; "and, if you are all ready, I think we'll go on."

Bob at once set off for the woods and the men followed him in single file, those who carried the stretcher coming next to him. He was delighted when he found that so many were anxious to see his father, for he had an idea that they had recovered from their resentment and that the breaking of the dams was something he could not have helped.

"And furthermore, suppose he gets a position of watching the new dams as soon as they are built?" he soliloquized. "I tell you that would bring things all right at last. Only, I wish father would give mother some of that money. He can't spend all that on himself."

Bob led the way at a rapid pace, and by the time night came they were in the gully where Walcott had made his first camp. Here they stopped to spend the night but were off again at the first peep of day, and along in the afternoon they came upon the place where old

man Carter had stood when Walcott drew a bead on him.

"I don't see how a man could lose that amount of blood and still capture that fellow," said the doctor.

"Oh, there is more than that up here a piece," said Bob. "Walcott must have stood about the foot of that tree when father pulled on him and knocked his cap endwise. Halloo, there!" he added, raising his voice.

"I am all right and tight, but hungry as I can be," said a strong voice from the bushes. "Have you brought anything to eat?"

"Plenty of it," said Bob; and with the words he pushed his way into the evergreens and brought the party to his father's camp. Old man Carter was a little bit surprised to see so many men coming upon him, but the way they all shook hands with him soon showed him that they were friends and not enemies.

"Now, Bob, give him something to eat, and at the same time I will look after his leg," said the doctor, who peeled off his coat as if he were going to work in the hayfield.

"Why, he gave you something of a hit, didn't he?"

"Why, Carter, I don't see how you had the pluck to go on and capture him," said one of the men who had been the most anxious to find the culprit on the night they came to his house. "I should have felt like running the other way."

"I was after them pocket-books," said old man Carter, pausing between his bites to answer the question. "The way it was, it seemed to me that fellow had my name mixed up with it, and I was determined to get what he stole, if I could."

In process of time the doctor had his leg done up and old man Carter was reclining at his ease on a bed of blankets which had been made up for him. He felt more free from pain after his wound was dressed. When he laid back there, smoking his pipe, he wondered if he was the man who had been chased away from his home by these fellows who now tried to treat him so kindly. There was one thing about it, he told himself: unless somebody else who wanted that position had more influ-

ence than he had, he was certain to get his old place of watching the dams. He didn't care for his wound after that. He would have been willing that Walcott should have shot him twice, for if he ever got back there in his shanty it might rain pitchforks, but he would go out in it.

Morning came at length, and the sun found them far on their way toward home. Old man Carter kept them in good humor by relating some stories he told of life in the woods, and which none of them had ever heard before, so that they got to a stopping-place before they knew it. Mr. Carter wanted to know one thing, and that was what they had done with Walcott; but his fears on that score were set at rest by the constable, who told him that he had sent him off in charge of a deputy to be lodged in the jail at the village.

"He will appear before the justice of the peace there, and you will have to go at the same time to prove that you have been shot," said the officer.

"I'll do it," said Mr. Carter. "And I

will prove that he kept me here in the woods until I had to have help come after me."

In due time they reached Mr. Roberts' store, and there was another crowd that was anxious to see him. They came around him and shook him by the hand, and more than one man praised his courage. After resting a short time they started on again, and when they came opposite Hugh Pratt's house the door opened and the boys came running out to meet them. They had their overcoats on, and that was evidence enough that they were going on to Bob's house. They first shook hands with old man Carter and then fell back beside Bob.

"Why how did it happen?" said Paul. "Tell us all about it."

Of course there wasn't much to tell, but what he did say interested them not a little. They heard him through, and then Paul whispered:

"We have heard from that hatter, and he says you can send your skin on as quick as it suits you. He will give you a hundred dollars for it as soon as he sees it."

"Good enough," said Bob, so overjoyed that he could scarcely speak plainly. "You sent it on at once, of course?"

"No, we didn't. We wanted to see you first and see what you thought about it. You come up to Hugh's house to-morrow and we'll send it off."

Bob didn't know whether he stood on his head or his heels after that. He opened the door for those who bore the stretcher to carry old man Carter into the house, helped place him in bed, thanked the men over and over again for what they had done for him, and then took a seat beside his mother, who was crying softly; whereupon Paul and Hugh, seeing that there was nothing further that they could do, bade him good-night and hurried away.

"You cried because I went away, and now you cry because I come back," said Mr. Carter from his place among the bedclothes. "I wish I could get my old position again. I tell you I would keep it."

Mrs. Carter got up and went into the bedroom, and Bob, not being very anxious to see

and know what was said there, went into the kitchen with his game-bag. He moved around there straightening things to rights, and then went into the sitting-room again. Things had probably been settled by this time, for Mrs. Carter sat on the edge of the bed looking as happy as could be.

"Now I have something to say," said Bob. "I am going to send off that skin tomorrow and expect to get one hundred dollars for it."

"Bob, why didn't you put that fur in Hugh's hands in the first place?" said Mr. Carter. "Then I should never have got hold of it. It was a mean trick for me to steal it, but I wanted money and I didn't care how I got it. I am sorry enough for it now."

Bob did not say anything, for he readily concluded that if his father fell to abusing himself he felt about as wretched over his stealing as a man could. He hoped that it would be a lesson to him.

Bob did not sleep much that night, for he was kept awake by the thought that he had a hundred dollars coming to him. Things had

looked dark for a spell, but he was all right now. His father, even if he had any designs upon the fur, could not get up and carry them out now, and before he got well enough to hobble around with his leg he could send the fur off to that hatter and have his money safe in Hugh's pocket. When daylight came he got up and had breakfast, not forgetting toast and poached eggs for his father, and when the dishes had been cleared away he posted off to Hugh Pratt's to see about sending off that fur.

"I tell you I wouldn't have given a cent for your chances of getting any money for this," said Paul, when Hugh brought the skin down from the loft and laid it on the table. "I thought you had lost it, sure."

"Well, I have it again, and father is all right," said Bob; and there he stopped, for he had something on his mind that he wanted to speak about. The boys saw that there was something the matter with him and Hugh hastened to inquire—

"You've got the skin and what more do you want? Are you afraid to let us send it off?"

"No, indeed. But I want to ask you about father's getting a chance to watch those new dams. Who have your fathers got in view now?"

"To my knowledge they haven't got anybody," said Paul. "Do you want your father to have his old position?"

"If you do I think he will get it," chimed in Hugh. "A man who will go after the fellow that shot him, and make a prisoner of him and tie his hands behind his back, carries a big recommendation with him. We'll speak about that as soon as we go home."

"Thank you," said Bob, who had much faith in the boys' powers of persuasion. "If you say a good word in his favor he will get the chance to watch the new dams."

Bob rested easy after this assurance. Things were working his way at last. He assisted the boys in tying up the skin of the white beaver, placing a couple of thin boards on the outside so that the skin would remain at full length, and when it was all done Paul sat down and addressed it to the hatter in his bold school-boy fashion. This done, they

wrote a letter of advice, sealed it up, and the package was all ready for the expressman.

"I don't see why I should have signed my name to that letter," said Hugh. "Your father is all right now, and why should you object to having the money sent to you?"

"Because I want it safe," said Bob. "And I would like to have you keep that money in your hands until I ask for it."

"I might run away and spend it," said Hugh.

"I'll risk that," said Bob with a laugh."

Our hero went on his way toward home at a dog-trot, and when he got there he went to work at his wood-pile. From something his father had said he got an idea that Percival and Ben Morton were going to say a word in favor of old man Carter, and Bob didn't know whether to tell his father that he had spoken to Paul and Hugh or not. He was afraid that Mr. Morton's influence would not amount to much. He thought the matter over while he was sawing wood, and at length came to the conclusion that he would say nothing about it. His father need not know

that Mr. Morton had been consulted at all; but it seems that that gentleman was not in favor of having Mr. Carter there to watch the dams. He had another man in view—one whose political influence would amount to something.

Percival and Ben took the stage the next morning and when they reached the village they went straight to their father's office, and finding him alone told him the story of Walcott's robbery of them. They told it, too, in much the same manner that they told about Hector's assault on Percival. They did not confine themselves strictly to the truth, but when they saw an opportunity to tell how Walcott had abused them, they did not fail to put it in. Mr. Morton listened in indignation, and said that he would give a hundred dollars for the sake of having that man arrested.

"I certainly hope you will succeed," said Percival. "But there is one thing you can do for old man Carter. He has gone off alone after Walcott, and if he arrests him, I think he ought to have his old position; don't you?"

"No, I do not," answered his father. "I will give him a few dollars to pay him for the trouble he has been to, but when it comes to watching the new dams, I think I shall put somebody else in there."

"But you must look out for Pratt and Smith," observed Ben.

"I will look out for them when the time comes," replied Mr. Morton, loftily. "Their influence won't amount to a row of pins."

This was all that Percival had to say in regard to Mr. Carter. If he depended upon that boy for his old position he would never be heard of again. His father had somebody else in sight, and that was enough for him. Paul and Hugh pursued a different course. They went down to the village by stage on the morning after they had done up the white beaver fur, put it in the express office, and then started for the lumber office, where they would be certain to meet their fathers. They told the story of the robbery just as they had heard it from Bob Carter, and wound up with the request that the gentlemen would do something for Mr. Carter.

"It isn't for old man Carter's interest that we want you to give him his old position," said Paul. "But Bob has stuck by his mother through thick and thin, and we want him to have some pay for it. He says that his father, if he gets the new dams to watch, will attend to his business. This has been a pretty hard school for him."

"Well, we will think about it and see what can be done," said Mr. Smith. "You know the reason why the old dams broke, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, and it isn't likely that anybody will ever forget it," said Hugh. "He has been tried once, but if you will give him another trial I know he will do better."

But little now remains to be told. Of course Walcott's preliminary examination came off before the justice of the peace as soon as Mr. Carter's leg was strong enough to enable him to take the stage and go down to the village, and the consequence was that he was committed to jail to await the action of the grand jury. But few words were said about the hound's attacking Percival Morton

or in regard to Walcott's being up in that country. Whether or not Percival's lawyer had been posted it is hard to tell, but he could not keep Walcott's counsel—the one that had been appointed by the court, for Walcott was not able to hire a lawyer to defend him—from asking Percival the object he had in view in sending the prisoner up into the woods. The Morton boys were in a bad scrape. They tried their best to get out of it, but it came out that Walcott was hired to shoot Bob Carter's hound. The counsel made much, too, of old man Carter stealing Bob's white beaver skin, but, contrary to his expectation, Mr. Carter did not deny it. He told how he had got the beaver fur and what he intended to do with it, and his evidence went a long way toward getting him his old position.

When the trial was over, and Bob and his father were about to take the stage to go home, Paul and Hugh came up, their faces wreathed in smiles.

"Have you got it?" asked Bob.

"Yes, sir, we've got it. See here," said Paul,

taking a roll of bills from his pocket, "do you want any of it?"

"No, I don't. You take it and put it in the bank to your own credit, and whenever I want any of it I'll ask you for it."

Old man Carter heard the conversation, and when the stage had started he told Bob how thankful he was that he had the hundred dollars where nobody could get at it. That had been a warning to him, and he nevermore would touch things that did not belong to him.

After that, things went all right about the house. It made no difference how affairs were going on, old man Carter never grumbled. As soon as he got so that he could hobble around with a cane he took part in the work that was to be done, and he never complained of his wound at all. He was on nettles, though, for he did not know what was going to be done with his application for his position as watcher of the new dams. He was depending on Percival for it, and we have seen how hard he tried to get it; but one afternoon, while Bob was raking up the yard, he saw the

stage come up, and the driver waved a letter to him.

"The old man got it," he exclaimed, as the boy came up to him. "There's a letter from Albany, and I think he will find a job in there. Tell him for me that he mustn't stay in the house the next time it rains."

Old man Carter tore off the envelope with trembling hands, and, sure enough, there was his appointment at the same salary as before. We may anticipate events a little by saying right here that when Mr. Morton got ready some months afterward to send on his application he received the answer that the appointment had already been made. Of course he was angry about it, and straightway made up his mind that he would join some other political party.

"They have appointed that old man Carter, who will let the dams break if it rains too hard," said he in disgust. "Such men as we have there in Albany are of no use to anybody. I hope he will let the new dams break, too."

"This is what I get by having a little

pluck," said Mr. Carter. "I knew what I was doing when I went after that villain Walcott."

Spring opened at last, and a crowd of men went up to South pond to begin work on the new dam. Bob went with them, leaving his father at home nursing his wound and to attend to his mother. All that summer he worked in mud and water, but every time pay-day came he got his two dollars and a half a day and took it home. He did not spend a cent of it on himself. By fall the dams were all complete and the mill was running again. Paul and Hugh took their places at the high stool and at the circular saw, and Bob acted as "swamper" for one of the teamsters. The old foreman was there yet, and he never ceased to thank Paul and Hugh for what they had done for him. He was determined that no more logs should get away from him during an overflow. Percival and Ben went out there once in a while to see them, but they did not stay more than half a day. They went into the woods out of sight, where they could say harsh things against Bob and his friends. Old man Carter is in his shanty